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SEA FISHING MAGAZINE

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I have just returned from Tresco on the Scilly Isles with the family, and what fabulous time I had! My folks have a timeshare there and I have always wanted to visit with them. Every year the invite is sent but, for whatever reason, I have always been unable to go. This year, however, I finally made it.

I cannot describe the beauty of passing over the islands in a small plane and viewing them from above – mesmerising is the only word I can think of that comes close. But, as amazing as the flyby is, I was (in typical angler style) scouting and making mental notes of potential areas to fish.

For the first part of the week I decided to do the family things – wander the island, pop over to some of the other islands and generally explore. During the walks I wanted to wander the coastal paths and identify fishing spots for later on that week, and by golly there were lots! Tresco is a fisherman's heaven for sure. For three days I did this and the weather was pretty good – my mouth literally watering each time we passed any obvious fishing hotspots. But, being a dutiful and dedicated family member, I'd made the conscious decision

not to carry my rods everywhere. After all, this was supposed to be family 'downtime'.

As the week progressed, my chance to fish arrived. I had brought only LRF gear and a general purpose lure rod for anything of a decent size. My plan was to wrinkle out as many species as possible LRF-style before targeting some of the monster wrasse with the heavier rod. This fishing is always best on rockier parts of an island where the fish live, and would certainly be no use on the beautiful, clean white sandy beaches.

The weather, by then, had taken a real turn for the worse with 60mph winds and rain, and for two days we never left the house. You're probably shouting; "It's an island! You can always find a spot to fish out of the weather in lee of the land!" Unfortunately, I'd injured my back and the extensive walking had made it very sore, so any venues I wanted to fish couldn't involve steep rock climbing for safety issues. Well, Tresco does offer accessible rock fishing on the western side – Cromwell Castle was a particular target venue. The whole of the north side and the first part of the east is for the more adventurous rock anglers out there, and not an option for me. The

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wind was howling from the west, which meant hell on earth at Cromwell Castle and a couple of other spots I fancied. The east side was fishable, but not for me. Frustrating or what?

A break in the weather came on my final day and I ventured out to the spots that had made me drool on my sightseeing trips. I struggled slowly along the mile hike to Cromwell Castle in the afternoon as the tide was rising. All seemed well, then as fast as the nasty weather left it returned. LRF was impossible and casting into the strengthening winds was hard work – and that was without the building swells that chased me off the rocks several times. Oh well, there's always next year – but if I go again I will fish when conditions suit. I think the family will forgive me. At least, I hope they will!

Tight lines,

Barney Wright

Barney Wright
Editor



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INTO THE UNKNOWN

Photograph: Mike Thrussell

Words: Barney Wright

One of the factors that first turned me onto sea fishing was the mystery of the unknown. Coarse fishing was less of an enigma – you pretty much knew what was out there, and where it would be. But there's a feeling of adventure as we lower lines into the deep, dark seas, not knowing what might take the hook.

This sense of wonder is especially strong as a kid; everything is new and revelatory. As we get older and learn more, we grow to understand the sea better and make a bit more sense of it. Still, at least once during every trip I hook into something unknown. When this happens, I take things slowly. I want it to stay on the hooks – I want to know what I've caught! Is it a new species, or, better still, a personal best fish?

Soon that wonderful time comes – the fish becomes visible and we try to identify what it is before it breaks the surface. The sight of the fish twisting and turning as it nears is the most exciting part; soon the mystery is unravelled and we claim our prize.

We are all kids at heart, and my advice is to never lose that child within us – we must embrace and enjoy the excitements we find in life. Sea fishing certainly affords us that luxury. ➤



NO PLACE LIKE HERM

Adam Landy recalls a wonderful trip to Herm
– a venue that should be on every sea angler's bucket list...



It's not every day you get an offer to go to the Channel Islands for a fishing trip, so you can imagine how swiftly I snapped the offer up when one came along. It was a chance to spend a week fishing with *SFM* editor Barney Wright and seasoned contributor Mike Thrussell, along with around 30 other anglers who regularly holiday on Herm. My goals were simple: to catch a new species, and to achieve at least one new personal best.



GEAR AND TACKLE

The critical thing to note is that fishing on Herm is light and simple – the heaviest rod needed would be a bass rod. Taking heavy and complicated gear can actually cost you, and you may see no action at all. As such, it's best to bring a bass rod, light rods for spinning or fly fishing, along with some small leads (3oz maximum), hooks and suitable lures. In terms of clothing, you'll need lightweight waterproofs, waders, walking boots, a cap and sunglasses.

The prime baits for Herm are mostly worm baits, with some fish baits also being used at times. The most popular is verm, a local type of worm, and razorfish. Also used by locals are scallop frills, squid, black and blow lug, mackerel and ragworm.

Most baits can be bought from Mick's Fishing Supplies on Guernsey, with the exception of verm, which is not sold but dug by anglers on secret local marks to avoid overexploitation.

ALL THE FUN OF ROSSAIRE

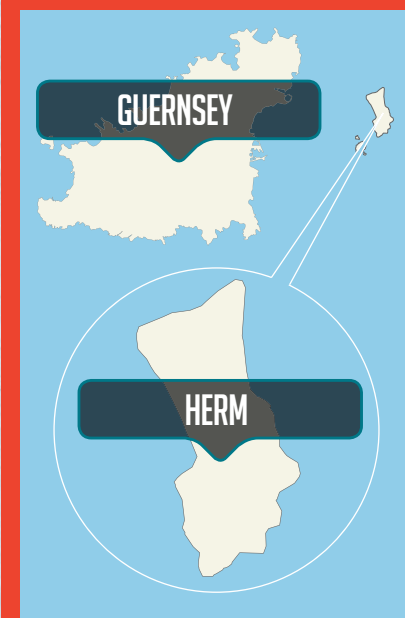
Rossaire Steps is one of the docking stations for the local ferry, the Trident, and a great spot for fishing. The mark is known to produce bass, bream and conger, with an array of mini species for LRF action and some monstrous

HERM, BAILIWICK OF GUERNSEY

Herm is a tiny island that sits three miles east of Guernsey. The island measures a mile and a half long and half a mile wide.

From mainland UK the journey entails a ferry from Weymouth to Guernsey, then using the local ferry to get from Guernsey to Herm.

There are no cars on the island but everywhere is accessible by foot. There are quite strict rules about staying there; the residents aren't shy in removing those who don't abide by them either! Because of this, the place simply oozes peace, tranquillity and an affinity with nature. The walks are breathtaking; however, there are some serious gradients to tackle along the way, so if you are not used to hills, you might end up with what the locals call 'Herm legs'.



'rockies' (a local name for wrasse) up to 8lb. Fishing is equally good off the rocks beside the steps, but caution should be heeded as the rocks are covered with slippery weed and the water rises quickly, covering the majority of this area during the flood.

Our first visit to this mark was with LRF gear in tow, fishing directly off the end of the steps at mid-ebb into the well-featured waters below. We were using one-gram jigheads, baited with sections of Marukyu Isome sandworms. Instantly we were into fish, hooking into many ballans and corkwings and pollack. Mike was into a patch of tompot blennies,

and Barney found a solitary goldsinny wrasse. The action was relentless and proved to me just how much fun LRF could be, this being my first stab at the discipline. During the LRF session, I had managed to dig out my first tompot blenny, which meant I achieved my first goal of catching a new species.

We took a different approach on our second trip to the steps – spinning rods, 3oz grippers, 2/0 hook running ledgers or bolt style rigs, and in search of bream. We'd heard that there was chance of black, Couch's and gilthead bream here and our guide Pete Glazzard knew exactly when the bites would come. He was bang on the money, and as the tide reached a certain point the bream came on the feed, with Pete landing a decent sized black, followed by myself, Barney and then Pete again. Sadly, all fish were black bream and no other species put in an appearance. On the other hand, it really emphasised how local knowledge or experience can make the difference between catching and blanking.

NEVER REGRET THE TRIP TO VERMERETTE

One trip that Barney, who had been to the island before, was keen that Mike and I should experience was the fishing of various lagoons over low water, which is done between Herm and Vermerette, following the tide back as it floods. There was a chance of bass and bream using simple running ledgers, with verm or razors as bait. I cannot emphasise enough that this is not attempted by a novice, nor by someone fishing alone. You should be accompanied by a seasoned and experienced local guide who has fished this mark before and knows exactly when to move. Where the concept is to fish lagoons and wade back with the tide, it is very easy to get lost and could quite easily prove fatal, given the sheer volume of water the flood brings.

We had the great fortune of having a well-seasoned guide in Pete Glazzard. He has fished Herm for around 17 years and knew the marks well – in fact, he had



Expert guidance led Adam to a black bream

INTERESTINGLY...

Cars and bicycles are not allowed on Herm, the only way around is on foot. There are tractors and quadbikes, but these are for the staff only.



Rossaire Steps is a top fishing mark

been an employee on the island for some time several years ago. There were but two rules; first, when you put your light on, face backwards and keep the light off the water, and second, when Pete says "Move", you move! At the pace at which the flood comes in, an extra five minutes could spell disaster.

TERRIFIED

From Herm Pier we walked out around three-quarters of a mile in the direction of Vermerette, during which we heard the distant warning sounds of foghorns. With visibility fine, we continued and reached

the furthest lagoon and began fishing. It was an incredible experience, with the lights of Guernsey on the horizon and thousands of shrimps lighting up the water in front of us like shooting stars in the water. Barney was quickly into a bite, which transpired to be a dogfish, while Mike landed a healthy looking bass of around 2lb. Then, like something from a Stephen King novel, a blinding blanket of fog descended upon us. The tide was around ankle height at this stage. Pete said he wasn't happy to continue, and that for safety's sake we must return to the shore immediately.



The rocky islets, or 'Humps', only become accessible on the ebb tide

We formed a chain so that each could follow the man in front, with Pete at the front. There were a few heart stopping moments when he stated that we should have been at a certain rock or spot by now, and that there was possibly a little doubt as to our exact whereabouts. But we had faith, and fear certainly made me march fast! This is where experience is everything, as by the time we got ashore we were knee deep, and getting lost out there could have proven disastrous. Although the session was cut short, I was really relieved and grateful that Pete didn't take any risks and got us safely back to fish another day.

GETTING THE HUMPS

Later, Pete told us that there was "a chance of doing the Humps tomorrow," to which an excited Barney said "I don't care what else we do this trip, but we have to do the Humps!"

The Humps are a set of offshore rocky islets, which only become exposed during the ebb tide. The islets are surrounded by reefs and deep channels that provide excellent fishing.

We took a small RIB from Shell Beach out to the small patch of exposed sand, waiting for tide to ebb. It is an experience not easily described and one that is irreplaceable; it's like fishing undiscovered lands, and the excitement was palpable.

The set up comprised waders, spinning rods, lures and some bait gear. I opted for Marukyu Isome soft plastics and started manoeuvring around the islet to fish the channels.



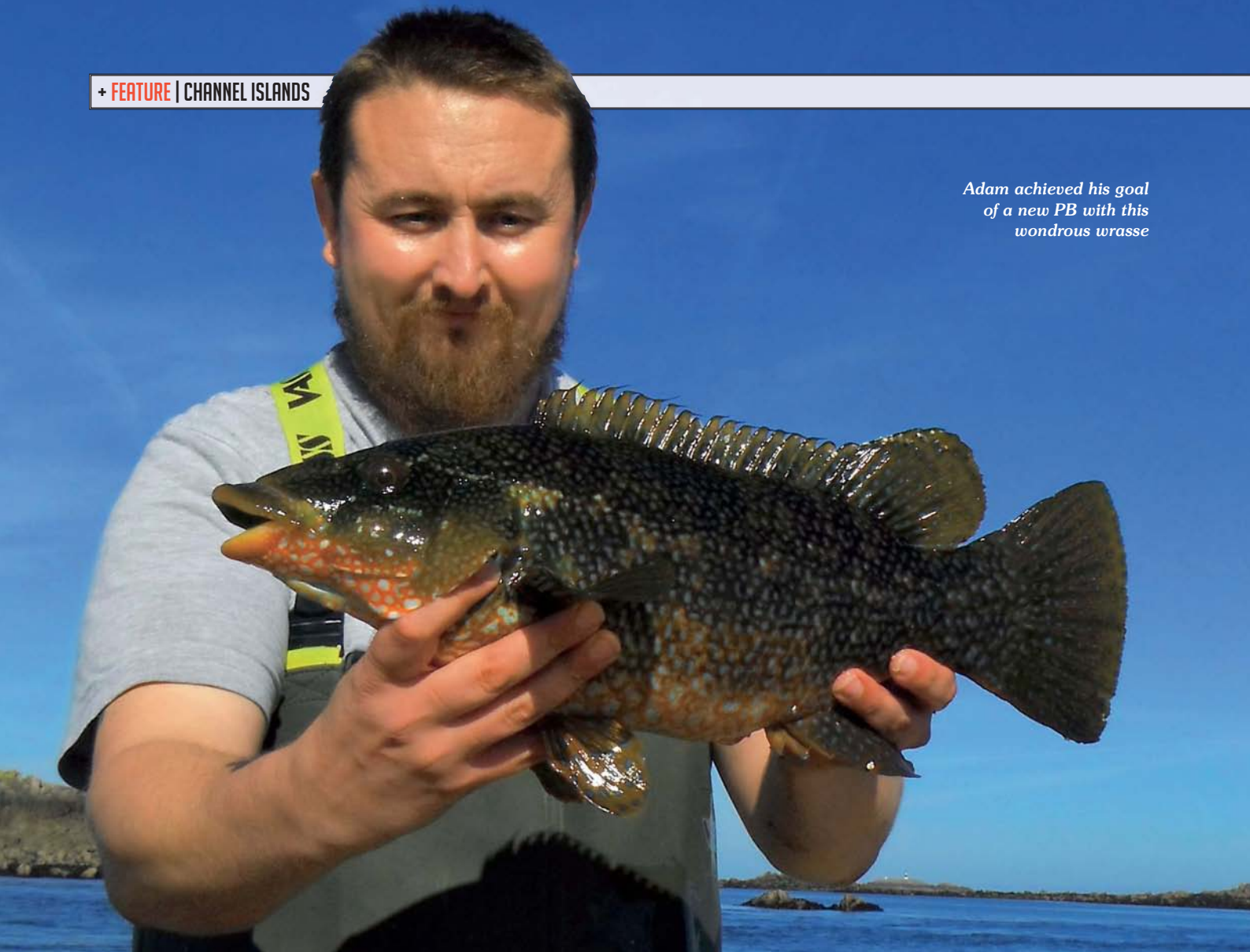
The only way to get to Herm is by local ferry

Barney Wright says: "Herm is a place I first visited eight years ago, and I just fell in love with it. I return when ever I can. When I'm there, I feel truly free – there's no traffic, hardly any noise and I'm surrounded by sea! It's a real taste of heaven."



Mike used the Fiish Black Minnow to bring in several smaller wrasse

Adam achieved his goal of a new PB with this wondrous wrasse



MY BIGGEST EVER

A couple of local lads had decent takes on the plastics but didn't hook into the fish. After they moved to another spot, I decided I would take their place, getting a serious knock first cast. Second cast and I had it hooked; the rod arched right over and I began to panic. It was stripping line and headed down into a reef. A brief struggle saw it come out of the reef, straight into a kelp bed. Applying constant pressure and negotiating the fish out of the weed, it came free and continued to scrap. The mass came closer, and when it was about 10 feet away the weed parted and revealed the biggest wrasse I have seen in the flesh. It was well over 5lb, with others commenting it was more like 6lb. Rather than keep the fish out of the water to weigh it properly, I put it back quickly. Another of my goals had been reached – a new PB wrasse.

Once re-rigged, as the wrasse had smashed my soft plastic lure to pieces, I

went off to find Mike Thrussell, who had already caught around nine wrasse of up to 1lb using the Fiiish Black Minnow. However, just one cast with my Marukyu Isome saw an instant hook-up with a stunning 2lb 8oz ballan. As the tide began to flood hard, we switched to baits and with Barney getting a serious take on live sandeel, I followed suit. I had what felt like a proper flattie take whilst touch ledgering, but was sadly dragged in a snag I couldn't get free from. There are some good-sized turbot to be had at this mark and the bites Barney and I had could have been evidence of such.

The Humps are another mark which would unquestionably be dangerous to an inexperienced person, so you shouldn't attempt it unless accompanied by a seasoned angler with experience of this mark, or a local guide.

HERM SWEET HERM

Herm is amazing. The fishing was quite average during our visit, but it wasn't

a true reflection of its potential. The location and marks fished were nothing short of breathtaking.

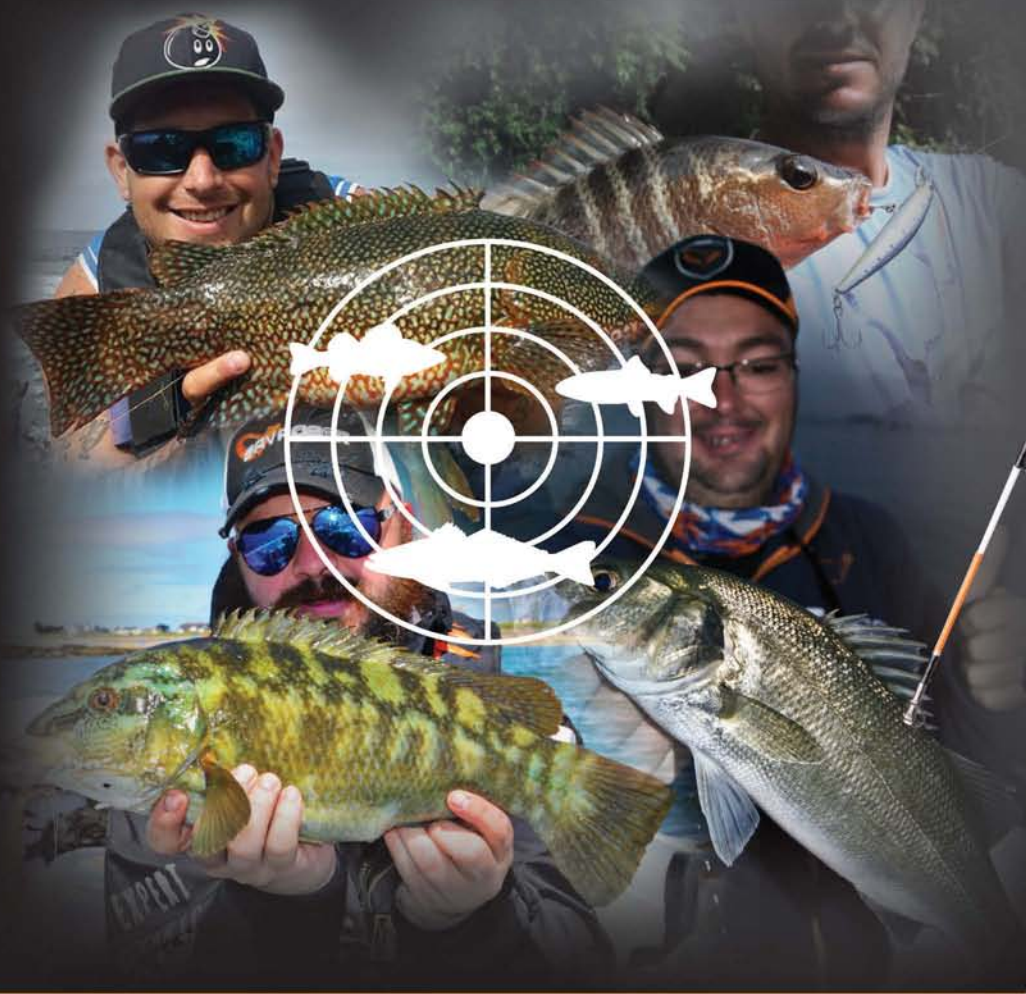
Herm is a family friendly place and the accommodation is stunning. The people are friendly, the beaches and countryside are immaculate – it really is the embodiment of the rural idyll. However, the tidal movement is extraordinary and any unfamiliar anglers would be wise to seek out a local guide for safety's sake. Fishing the offshore islets is always going to hold inherent risks, so it's wise to minimise them as best as possible with local support.

Forget everything you think you know; Herm fishes really quite differently to other places. Light and simple is the ethos and the results of this approach are unarguable, with a local catching 20lb of bass (three fish) in just a couple of hours. It's an experience that's well worth investing in, as long as visitors are aware of risks and take every precautionary measure. ➤

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To enter your catch, email the details of your fish and how you caught it to barneyw@blazepublishing.co.uk or send us a message on Facebook. You can also write to *Sea Fishing Magazine*, Blaze Publishing, Lawrence House, Morrell Street, Leamington Spa, CV32 5SZ. Make sure you tell us:

- Your name*
- Species caught*
- Weight of fish*
- Venue
- Bait/tackle used*
- Your contact details

Don't forget to include the photo!

This month's winner will receive an **HTO Lure Game 8ft spinning rod** worth £54.99. All other entrants will receive a **full box of rig winders** worth £8.99 each.

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The bestselling Tronixpro rig winders keep rigs neat and tangle free, and are easy to store away for future use.

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CATCH REPORTS

Here are your top catches from the past month...



★ ★ STAR CATCH ★ ★

Gerald Sargeant caught a fantastic 16lb 5oz 8dr cod when fishing a match with the Eastbourne Nomads. Gerald is a big caster and blasted out live lugworm on a size 2 hook hoping for a codling, but got much more than he bargained for. Gerald hooked into and landed this monster cod, and also landed two codling and a pouting, giving him a total weight of 20lb 7oz.

Not only did Gerald win this club competition, he also won the heaviest round fish and the Super Pool, and took the club record. The previous record stood since 11 November 2004 and was 15lb 4oz, caught by Ron Roberts.





Charter boat Anna 2, skippered by Tony Heart, had a brilliant haul on 9 March. Despite difficult conditions, the crew – including Daniel Ferguson, who submitted the report – managed to catch their three target species, turbot, brill and whiting, as well as some bonus fish. They caught 15 garfish over 1lb, mackerel, sandeels, turbot to 8lb, brill to 4lb and a few decent whiting. Well done, lads!



Anthony North caught a beautiful undulate ray from an Isle of Wight mark.

Anthony said: "It was about two to three hours after low tide when I started having bites. When my mackerel-baited rod had a slack line bite, I tightened down and all hell broke loose. The fish was taking line and swimming uptide, so it took me around 15 minutes to get it in. It weighed 17lb 10oz."

Anthony also had a 3lb 8oz bass on sandeel just after the tide turned.

NEWS BITES

THREE-BASS LIMIT FOR ANGLERS

The European Council has introduced a bag limit of three bass per day for recreational anglers. The measure has been adopted to help the population of bass recover from recent decline.

According to statistics, recreational sea angling accounts for 25 per cent of total bass mortality in Europe.

Scientists recently advised the EC to reduce fishing for bass by 80 per cent in order to protect the species, and without action the population could collapse.

The daily limit on recreational catches complements the emergency measures to limit commercial fishing adopted by the Commission earlier this year.

36 'SUSTAINABLE' EU FISHERIES

The number of fisheries exploited by the European Union at maximum sustainable yield (MSY) levels is increasing in the East Atlantic, North Sea and Baltic Sea.

In 2014 there were 27 fisheries that were exploited at MSY, and the prediction for 2015 adds nine more – if fishing quotas decided by the Agriculture and Fisheries Council last December are followed properly.

ILLEGAL HAUL PROFIT FOR SUPERTRAWLER

The owner of a Cornelis Vrolijk supertrawler, which was caught fishing illegally in southwest England, has been permitted to sell its haul for a sum of £437,000, but was fined just £97,000. The owner of the *Frank Bonefaas* was also ordered to pay legal costs of £5,000, but that's still a net difference of £335,000.

The *Frank Bonefaas* was boarded by the Royal Navy in March last year when it was discovered fishing in a protected area. The trawler was carrying 632,000kg of illegally caught mackerel, all believed to have been caught in the protected area.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO), who brought the prosecution, against the trawler owner, admitted that the Dutch company that owns the trawler had been allowed to keep the catch. The court declined the invitation of the MMO to impose a fine that matched the total value of the haul.

NEWS BITES

UK CATCHES COULD DOUBLE

UK catches could double from the current 560 million tonnes of fish per year to 1.1 billion tonnes in just 10 years if stocks were allowed to recover in line with scientific advice, says the New Economics Foundation.

These larger catches would mean added revenue of £356 million a year in the UK, based on current prices. Thousands of new jobs could also be created to deal with the increase.

However, if the quotas were to be realigned immediately, more than one-tenth of current fishing levels would have to be sacrificed in the UK. This figure would be greater for other member states.

FLADEN LIFEJACKET OFFER

Fladen are offering readers of *SFM* over 50 per cent off their Pneumatic 150N lifejackets.

All Fladen Rescue System flotation garments are tested and approved to the European Union Standards CE mark.

Go to page 60 for details of this fantastic deal.

BIG BEACH CLEAN UP

Marks & Spencer is encouraging customers to roll up their sleeves and help clean up the UK's beaches.

The high street store is asking its customers to join their team of employees, the Marine Conservation Society and the Canal & River Trust in an effort to clear litter from Britain's beaches and canals. This call has come after the recent MCS survey that revealed litter on British beaches rose by 6.4 per cent in 2014.

This will be the fourth Big Beach Clean Up for M&S, and will cover 135 beaches and canals across the UK. The event will take place from 7 to 13 May, and over 8,000 people are expected to take part.

You can find your nearest beach clean and sign-up at www.mcsuk.org/foreverfish.

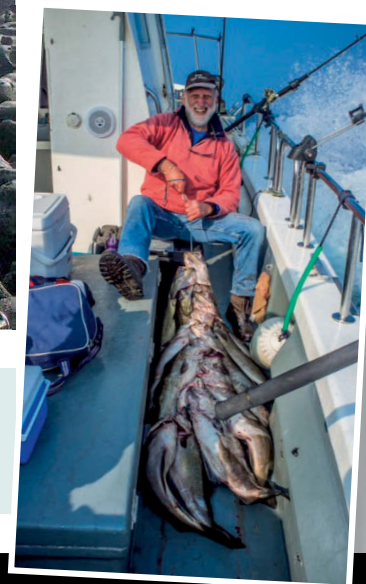
ALDERNEY APP

Alderney Angling's new app is coming soon! Download it to shop 24/7 and to catch up with local catch reports.



Andrew Davis caught a near-record ling from the shore from **South Wales**. The fish weighed in at 9lb 3oz and was caught on a pulley rig with sandeel as bait. Andrew also had an 8lb 2oz small-eyed ray, small conger and dogfish in a last minute session.

Chris Mitchell had 14 pollack from mid-Channel wrecks when fishing on *Grey Viking* out of Brighton. All the fish were taken on 6in Rhubarb and Custard Sidewinders, and there were plenty of doubles up to an estimated 18lb.



Aleks Zencaks caught this 2.1kg, 61cm cod from **Hastings Beach**. He was in for a surprise when he gutted the fish though – it had six sole in its stomach!



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NEWS BITES

TIDAL POWER NEGOTIATIONS OPEN

Chancellor George Osborne announced the opening of negotiations on a £1 billion tidal lagoon scheme in Swansea Bay. The chancellor made the announcement in the 2015 pre-election Budget speech in the House of Commons. It has been suggested that plans for the plants could be approved before the general election, as Conservative and Liberal Democrat ministers seeking to claim credit for the world's first tidal energy lagoon.

The scheme, which was revealed at the beginning of March, proposes to build huge tidal lagoons that would harness the power of the sea to create renewable energy for hundreds of thousands of homes across the UK.

KAYAKS AT CLA GAME FAIR

The CLA Game Fair will take place this year from Friday 31 July to Sunday 2 August at Harewood House in Yorkshire. One of the most exciting new additions is the kayak experience area, presented in partnership with GUL Watersports and Channel Kayaks. Visitors can try out kayaking and learn more about the sport from qualified professionals.

Find out more at www.gamefair.co.uk.

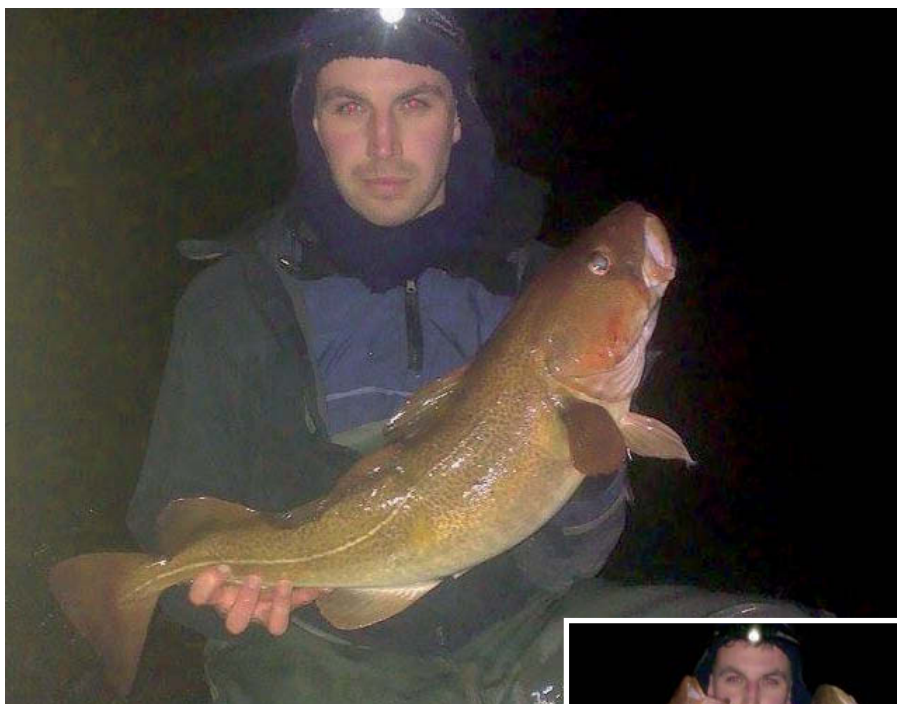
PROTECTION FOR PITCAIRNS

The UK will establish the largest continuous marine reserve in the world.

The zone will cover 834,000 sq km (322,000 sq miles) around the Pitcairn Islands in the Pacific Ocean, and will help to protect the 1,249 known species of plants and animals that live there from illegal trawling.

Vessel activity will be monitored by a satellite 'watchroom', which will gather information that could be used to prosecute illegal or unauthorised trawling in the area.

The National Geographic's Paul Rose said: "Ocean leadership like this from our government is exactly right. It protects the pristine waters of our overseas territories and sets an example to the rest of the world, giving hope and encouragement to future generations."



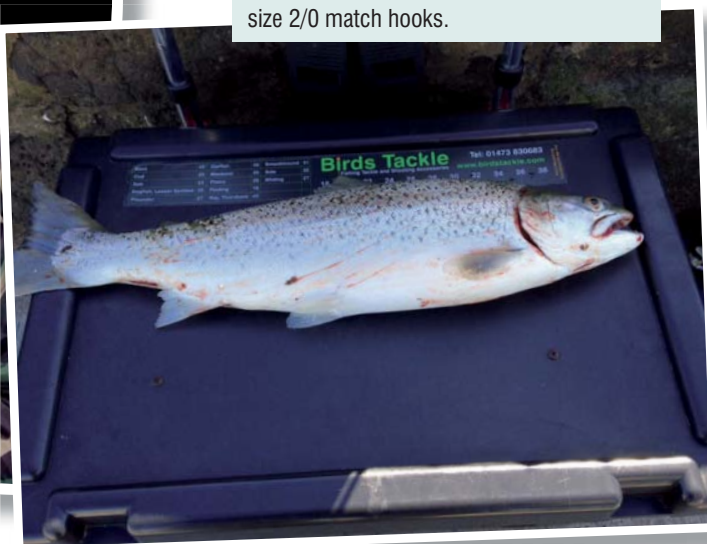
Alan Thain fished a Northumberland rock mark and landed five cod for 24lb. The biggest was 10oz, which was returned due to Alan's lifetime target of catching and releasing a double-figure cod. All fish were caught on bluey baits.

Richard Phillips landed his PB ling while drifting a wreck aboard *Flamer IV*. Richard had a right old tug on his 20lb class tackle trying to bring the big ling up from depths of 180ft. The fish weighed in at a spectacular 25lb 8oz. The successful bait was two whole calamari squid and mackerel fillet presented on a Pennel rig of Sakuma 6/0 Stinger hooks.



Raymond Walker caught a cracking sea trout of 3lb at Dundee. Unfortunately, Raymond managed to put a hook through his finger in the process!

Liam Fitzpatrick also caught a smashing sea trout, this time in Belfast. With a few hours off from fixing a ship in the dry dock, Liam grabbed some bait and headed out for a cast or two. He caught the sea trout on his third cast, and the fish was returned to fight another day. Liam used a sandeel and black lug cocktail on a pulley Pennel with size 2/0 match hooks.



FISHING WITH EMMA

Time for thornbacks!

WANT A BIG FISH FROM THE SHORE THIS SUMMER?

THEN TRY FOR A THORNBACK

SANDEEL, MACKEREL OR PEELER CRAB ON A STRONG 2/0-4/0 WILL DO THE JOB AS BAIT

I LIKE A CLIPPED DOWN PULLEY RIG. FASTENING IT DOWN WILL ALLOW YOU TO CAST TO DISTANCE...

JUST WATCH OUT FOR THE THORNBACK'S SPIKES!

IF YOU'VE EVER WONDERED WHAT MODERN SEA FISHING WOULD BE LIKE WITHOUT TRAWLERS AND COMMERCIAL FISHING, THIS SPECIES WILL GIVE YOU A GOOD IDEA. THORNBACKS AREN'T TARGETED COMMERCIALLY AND ARE CONSEQUENTLY THRIVING, BOTH IN SIZE AND NUMBERS. NOWADAYS, IF YOU WANT A HEAVY FISH FROM THE SHORE IN SUMMER, THESE AMAZING CREATURES ARE A REALLY GOOD BET.

THE NUMBER OF SPIKES OR THORNS THAT GIVE THE FISH ITS NAME CAN VARY CONSIDERABLY, SO ALWAYS BE CAREFUL WHEN HANDLING AND UNHOOKING THORNBACKS. GLOVES AND FORCEPS WILL MAKE YOUR LIFE A GREAT DEAL EASIER.

UK minimum size 41cm UK boat record 31lb 7oz UK shore record 22lb 11oz

YOUR LETTERS

If you've got something you'd like to share with us and the angling community, then please get in touch. Find us on Facebook or email the editor at barneyw@blazepublishing.co.uk. You can also write to us at *Sea Fishing Magazine*, Blaze Publishing, Lawrence House, Morrell Street, Leamington Spa, CV32 5SZ.

The editor reserves the right to amend items for reasons of space, brevity, legality and sense.

LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS A SPOOL OF ULTIMA F1 WORTH £7.95
AND A SPOOL OF ULTIMA POWERFLEX WORTH £4.95

DIY FISHERMAN

I particularly enjoyed the article on homemade lures in the April issue of *Sea Fishing Magazine*. I like to do a little woodturning when I'm not fishing and the obvious crossover seemed to be plugs.

Here are a few that I made last year – different woods give different lure weights and by hollowing the front face or adding bibs I can make poppers or divers.

The guys at lurepartsonline.com in the US have been a great source for the fixtures and fittings.

Winston Guy, via email

Ed: Thanks for the letter, Winston. I like the look of your lures, too – especially the 'Nemo' lookalike! We like to bring something different to the magazine whenever we can, and Simon Everett covered the lure building feature superbly.



UPCOMING ANNIVERSARY

I've just received my renewal for *SFM* – I can't believe it's nearly a year from the first publication. It has gone so quickly; watching and reading the magazine grow, from when it was first announced to now, at nearly a year.

I just wanted to say thank you for the best sea fishing magazine out there, and here's to the next year.

Martin Keightley, via email

Ed: Thank you for your support, Martin. We strive to improve each issue and try to be as informative and diverse as possible. A letter like yours makes it all seem even more worthwhile.

LITTER BUGS

I retired last year and have taken up sea fishing again, after a lapse of 25 years. I went on several occasions to Holyhead Breakwater, and at the time, I thought how untidy and dirty some anglers are – rubbish, beer cans, and worse.

I went to the breakwater last week, and needless to say, the owners have blocked it off, and there's now no admission to vehicles. This is a great shame, and it's another location spoiled for everyone by the inconsiderate few.

Sam Evans, Shropshire

Ed: Litter is a true bugbear of mine too, and it's happening everywhere. We should be responsible, and although it's not just anglers causing problems, it's a case of being grown-ups and taking charge. I know many of us who regularly clean up after other pier or breakwater users, and that's a good example to set.



WHAT YOU'RE SAYING ABOUT... ... THE THREE-BASS BAG LIMIT

The European Council has introduced a three-fish bag limit per day for recreational anglers. It is reported that recreational anglers are responsible for 25 per cent of bass caught in Europe.

Roger Tipple

I for one can't see how they can enforce it, and if I catch four and want to take them home, I will.

Chris Enstone

I agree with the limit. In the US they have recognised the threat to their striped bass population and have agreed to a one fish limit.

Colin Webb

25 per cent is down to anglers, so 75 per cent must be commercial – but they target the minority? I'm all for conserving bass, but commercial fishermen can take what the angler doesn't!

John Joyce

We in Ireland are already years ahead in bass conservation and its slowly starting to tell. Our policy of a commercial ban is another requirement, but I doubt the rest of the EU will follow suit.

Alec Clarke

I am lucky to get a bass every three years, and I have only caught three in one session once in my life, so bring it on! It makes no difference to me.

Mike Enright

Can anglers complain when every day you see pictures posted by anglers with seven or eight dead bass? The limit should be one fish max. There's no better fish caught than the one that swims away again.

SFM editor, Barney Wright

This was always on the cards, and was created in part by anglers' apathy. I have no problem with a limit; it's perfectly sensible. The real restriction should be put on the commercials, but every little helps.

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OVER THE EDGE

Gareth Davies goes to extreme lengths to reach a fishing mark, but was it worth the risk?

St Valentine's Day is meant to be a very romantic time spent with your sweetheart. This year, however, I had to settle for a few salty seadogs hell-bent on climbing cliffs and cuddling up to slimy critters with sharp teeth.

Kevin Legge, who loves chasing large huss, rays and tope from the shore was happy to help out, and promised to take us to an excellent mark just outside Minehead. Ammo Baits' Ian Tyldesley and my old pal Steve Gregory also decided to make the two and a half hour trip across the water to fish a location that was a secret to us until the last minute.





JAWDROPPING CLIFFS

On arrival at our mark, Steve, Ian and I were stunned into silence as we saw the treacherous cliffs dropping down below us. We couldn't quite get over the height of the limestone cliffs, which honestly looked more suited to an opening scene of Jurassic Park than a fishing trip, with sea mist and low clouds giving an eerie feel to the whole occasion. The area is also frequented by peregrine falcons, buzzards, stonechats and many other sea birds, not forgetting the large seals that can, on occasion, ruin a good day's fishing. We had one of these grey annoyances hanging around our fishing platform for most of the day, which I believe contributed to the poor showing of fish. Well, that's one of my many excuses.

SAFETY FIRST!

Kevin has fished here for over 35 years, so he knows the area like the back of his hand. He takes nothing for granted, though, and gave us a safety brief before we ventured literally over the edge. You can only reach this venue by rope, which also means you need to buddy up. You should never venture onto any of the north Devon rock marks (or, indeed, any dangerous rock mark) without doing a survey of the area first. Take a mobile just in case something goes wrong, keep tackle to a bare minimum and always take enough warm, dry clothing to keep you comfortable throughout the day, as it does go cold very quickly so near the water's edge. Footwear has to be sturdy, warm and with good tread. Cleated soles are a godsend that will to a point help you stay sure footed on the slippery rocks.



The climb down to the mark was treacherous

Kevin is an outstanding angler, with a list of fish to his name most would be envious of. The level of commitment this guy put in to secure ropes and ensure this mark is as safe as possible is incredible. In fact, he has gone as far as building a small concrete causeway using 250kg of rapid mix concrete humped down a coastal cliff to enable access at low water.

RISK-TAKING

As the adrenaline and fear coursed through our bodies after our epic descent (which felt more like Mount Everest than Devon with all our boxes and rods in tow), it made me wonder, why we take crazy risks to fish these marks. Is it because we need to escape the mainstream way of living, or is it the buzz of beating nature, taking a leap of faith (literally) and reaping the rewards? Having a sense of adventure and getting kitted out properly does go a long way to beating the monotony, and it enables you to go that bit further in pursuit of bigger, better fish.

DID IT PAY OFF?

The quarry was meant to be huss, with spurdog likely and conger also a good possibility. The only downside was the



Casting from the rocks was a difficult task





Ian used rough ground pulleys with heavy mono to deal with snags and sharp teeth



Steve looking a little pleased with the only huss of the day



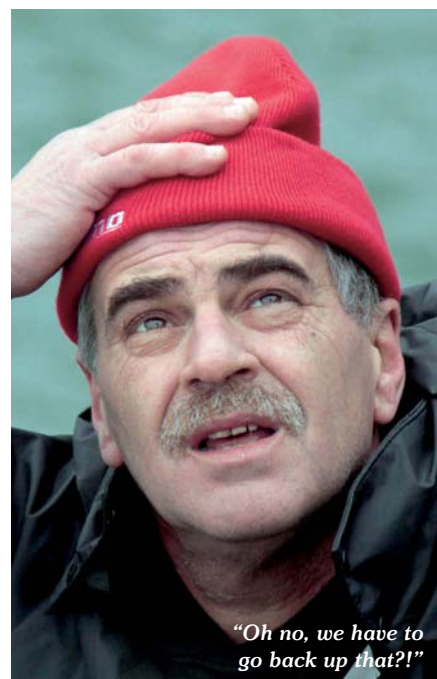
A small strap conger for Steve Gregory

fact we were fishing in mid-February, with low air temperatures making it feel a whole lot colder than it actually was.

Ian supplied the blast-frozen squid, cuttlefish and mackerel, while Kev brought along some premium frozen shore crab. Every aspect of the fishing was hard work; from perching on rock edges while baiting up to balancing like Mr Miyagi's protégés when casting and retrieving.

Huss just love kelp, and in recent years on these tides Kevin has worked out that they seem to come in close to lay their eggs in the kelp beds, well within casting range. Double-figure fish are standard off here when the fish are in residence, but unfortunately for us the huss just weren't home and we only brought in a few small fish.

The day had been a gamble though, as it wasn't quite the right time for the huss to lay eggs. Steve bagged the only notable huss of around 2lb, as well as a strap conger, while Ian caught a rockling. It just goes to show that even seasoned anglers can have off days. Maybe I should've stayed at home with my sweetheart after all! ➡



"Oh no, we have to go back up that?!"

YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A TOP-OF-THE-RANGE SONAR



Boat tech masters Raymarine are giving a *Sea Fishing Magazine* reader the opportunity to own one of the best Sonar and GPS systems available. The Dragonfly series has received international acclaim, and the Dragonfly 5 Pro model is about as advanced as you can get. The Dragonfly uses wide-spectrum CHIRP DownVision™ technology, which transmits more sonar signals into the water than other sonar devices, giving more details and higher quality feedback, creating an image structure with unmatched clarity.

Other features include built in GPS, Wi-Fi, multiple chart compatibility and an incredible depth range of 600ft. Installation is simple, with a compact ball-and-socket system that can be fitted anywhere. The Dragonfly 5 Pro really does make superior fishing electronics simple and accessible.

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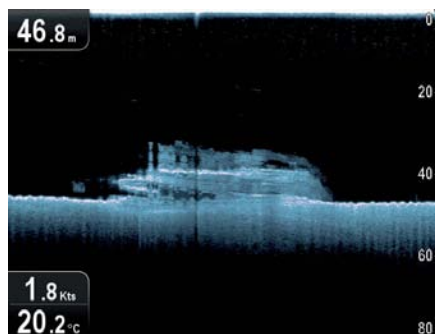
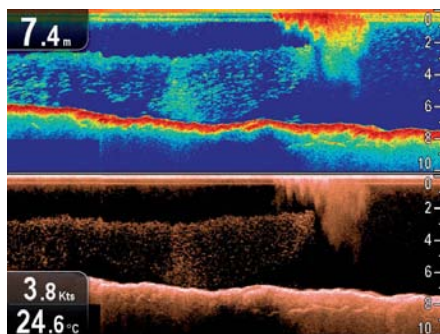
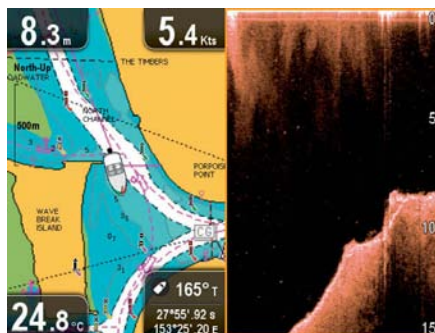
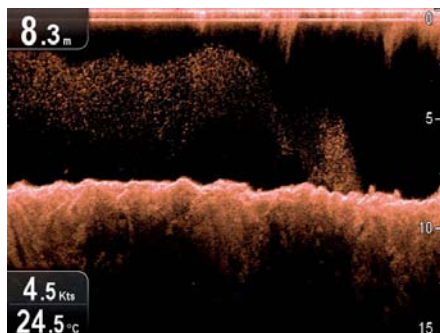
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MAKE YOUR OWN PLAICE SPOON

Get creative this spring and make your own attractor spoons with our handy step-by-step guide...

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the Swedish tackle manufacturer Abu made a spoon attractor lure that was different to the accepted norm. The Skäl lure was primarily made for ice fishing but soon found a loyal following amongst boat anglers fishing for plaice, especially at anchor. These heavy spoons were made of brass and were hemispherical instead of the more usual flattened oval shape. Some were heavily coloured but it was the polished brass ones that worked best on the plaice around the UK coast when fished at anchor. The flat spoons such as

the Rauto were the ones to use on the drift, and still are.

The Skäl and Rauto spoons were discontinued due to the high price of brass and copper and existing stocks were soon sold out. Their popularity dwindled with their lack of availability, to be replaced with lighter, more conventional spoon attractors. In certain circumstances though the old Skäl lure works much better, because it is heavier and holds the bait closer to the seabed. There is also a big difference in the action between the different types of spoon: the Skäl style spoon drags across

the bottom on the drift, or just rocks to and fro in the tide when at anchor.

There is a lack of commercially available Skäl style spoons - but there is a method of making them, which has been used to good effect for some years by SFM's Simon Everett. The weight of the brass and the shine from the polished surface is what sets this spoon apart from the other types. Putting a few beads on the trace is optional and sometimes can make a difference. Welsh brass love spoons have just the right size round spoon bowls to make these plaice spoons.

HOW TO MAKE A PLAICE SPOON

01 You will need a brass love spoon, a vice, a hacksaw, a drill, two stainless steel split rings and two high quality swivels.

02 Start by finding the drill bit that matches the thickness of the wire of your split rings. You need a hole large enough to accommodate the full thickness with a little room to spare.

03 Clamp the spoon in the vice by the handle. This makes it much easier to grip the spoon than trying to hold the bowl of the implement.

04 Drill a hole close to the edge of the bowl of the spoon. Leave enough meat on the spoon to ensure it remains strong; a big, sporting flatfish in a strong tide can exert a remarkable amount of pressure, as we all know.

Next, turn the spoon over and drill another hole exactly opposite the first one, so the spoon remains balanced in the tide.

05 With the holes drilled, you can now saw the handle off the spoon. Saw as close to the edge of the bowl of the spoon as you can. Try and follow the curve of the spoon to make life easier when it comes to filing off the burr.

06 File the edge of the spoon smooth where the handle was fitted. You want to remove any sharp protrusion and restore the profile of the spoon, both around the circumference and the edge profile.

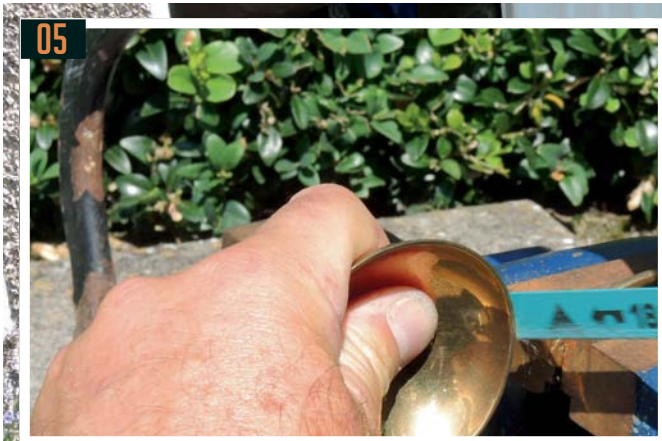
07 Once the spoon has been dressed with the file, you can fit the swivels to the split rings.

08 Fit the split ring to the hole in the spoon so that the swivel is on the outside.



TOP TIP

Make sure the holes are exactly opposite each other or your spoon will not be balanced



09

And there you have it – a finished spoon, with swivels attached to both sides, ready to be fished. The reel line is attached to one swivel and a trace of around a foot of 15lb fluorocarbon to the other, with a size 1 fine wire Aberdeen hook.

Bait the hook with ragworm tipped with a tiny sliver of squid for the best results. In strong tides, use a weight on a running ledger and lower the rig to the bottom slowly to avoid tangles.



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

There's no doubt that plaice are attracted to movement. They will sit on the seabed and move towards anything that glistens, causes vibration or is generally attractive to them. The reasoning behind this reaction is that where there's movement, there could be food.

When the fish's attention has been drawn to the spoon, it will soon locate your bait. Fishing with spoons is usually done on the drift, and the tide will allow you to drag the lure over the grounds (usually mussel beds) and seek out the fish. The spoon will waft and twist in the tide and move the bait enticingly and also quite naturally.

Tide speed can determine the hook length needed behind the spoon. Generally, the faster the tide, the shorter the snood should be, as the tide will take the bait up off the seabed too much in a strong run. Plaice will, however, come up many feet off the bottom to feed, so experimenting with lengths on the day will pay dividends. There is no set formula, but a trace between 3ft to 6ft will work in most situations.

On the drift, you will feel the bait and spoon pop away as it tickles the seabed on its travels. This will be rhythmical and you will become used to it. When you feel a more abrupt rattle or a sudden pull down that isn't a snag, it is most likely a plaice. The secret is to let out line so that the bait can remain almost static as the fish tries to take it down, because if it's snatched away the fish will most likely realise it's not natural and stay well away. After about 30 seconds, or even up to a minute, stop letting out line and slowly tighten up to feel for the fish. If it seems heavy at the end of the line, it's more than likely you have hooked the fish, so begin to reel in and play the fish. Plaice are terrific fighters, especially those over 3lb.

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HOW TO TARGET

BOAT TOPE

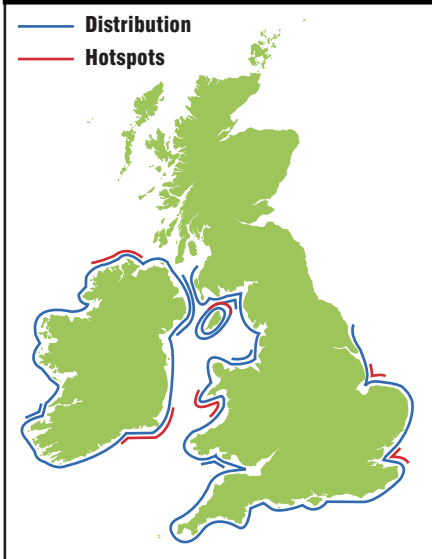
A shark-like predator that provides great sport, the tope is gaining a cult following from specialist anglers...

In sport fishing terms, the tope has everything going for it. These fish grow to a good size and can hit 100lb in weight, though the average is between 20lb and 40lb. The tope's main asset is that it fights hard with long and fast runs. Over the past 20 years, the tope has also become a cult fish for specialist anglers.



The tope's sharp teeth and shark-like appearance make it appealing to sport fishers

+ WHERE TO TARGET TOPE +



WHERE TO FISH

Tope are found along the whole of the UK coastline. They're common from the Mull of Galloway right down the UK's west coast, through the English Channel, and up the east coast to Yorkshire, though, as with every fish, some areas are more densely populated than others. On the east coast, the best areas are the banks off Essex, with ports like Bradwell seeing both numbers and big fish in excess of 70lb. Another major concentration of tope is found on the sandbanks in the Wash.

There are no real hotspots along the south coast, but a prime tope ground off Swansea and Tenby holds both numbers and big fish. Cardigan Bay in Wales has some of the UK's very best fishing, with huge numbers of pack tope to 30lb taken. Fish well in excess of 80lb have been tagged and released here in the past 20 years. Tope also show off the coast of Rhyl and the Dee Banks in North Wales, and in Morecambe Bay.

The most northerly hotspot is just south of the Mull of Galloway. Good numbers of pack tope to 30lb are resident here in season, and bigger 40lb fish show too.

Tope are also caught throughout Ireland, but the best spots are the loughs in the north, including Strangford and Carlingford, also the deeper water off the Antrim coast. In Donegal, Lough Swilly has both numbers of pack tope and 40lb plus fish. Other hotspots include the mouth of the Shannon estuary, Tralee Bay, and in the east the Wexford coast and the port of Wicklow can be superb.



Pack tope appear in numbers all around the UK

SEASONS AND TIMING

On the south coast they appear in March and will stay until September. Off the Essex coast, they start to show about mid-April, with May and June offering the best fishing. In the Wash tope appear in numbers from early May and stay until mid- to late July.

Off Swansea the tope appear in April and thin out in August. It's debatable whether the tope ever leave the waters of Cardigan Bay; they appear in late March, with May into early July seeing the best of the fishing, but can be taken in lesser numbers right through to November in the deeper water. Single fish can show in December, January and even February. Off Rhyl and the Dee estuary, the best of the fishing is from early May through to early July.

Morecambe Bay is good from mid-May onwards, and the Mull of Galloway best from late May to late July.

The Wexford coast in Ireland is much like Cardigan Bay, with fish taken from late March, catches peaking in May and June, then slowly easing away into September. In the west the Shannon is good from May to August, Lough Swilly from May to August, and the Antrim and County Down coasts seeing good fishing from late April to July.

TIDES

When fishing estuaries and loughs, the fast tide run may mean only smaller tides are fishable. In these circumstances tope tend to be taken just as the tide

speed is picking up or falling away. Bigger spring tides see very short feeding periods, with fewer fish being caught.

In open, shallow water, tope will be present in the best numbers on the medium and bigger spring tides. They may disappear during slack water periods, but will start to feed as the tide picks up and will continue while the tide is running, both ebb and flood.

If you're fishing uptide of a reef or rougher ground, the tope will run both the uptide and the downtide edges of the reef on the smaller neap tides. On the bigger tides they're much more likely to feed only on the downtide side.

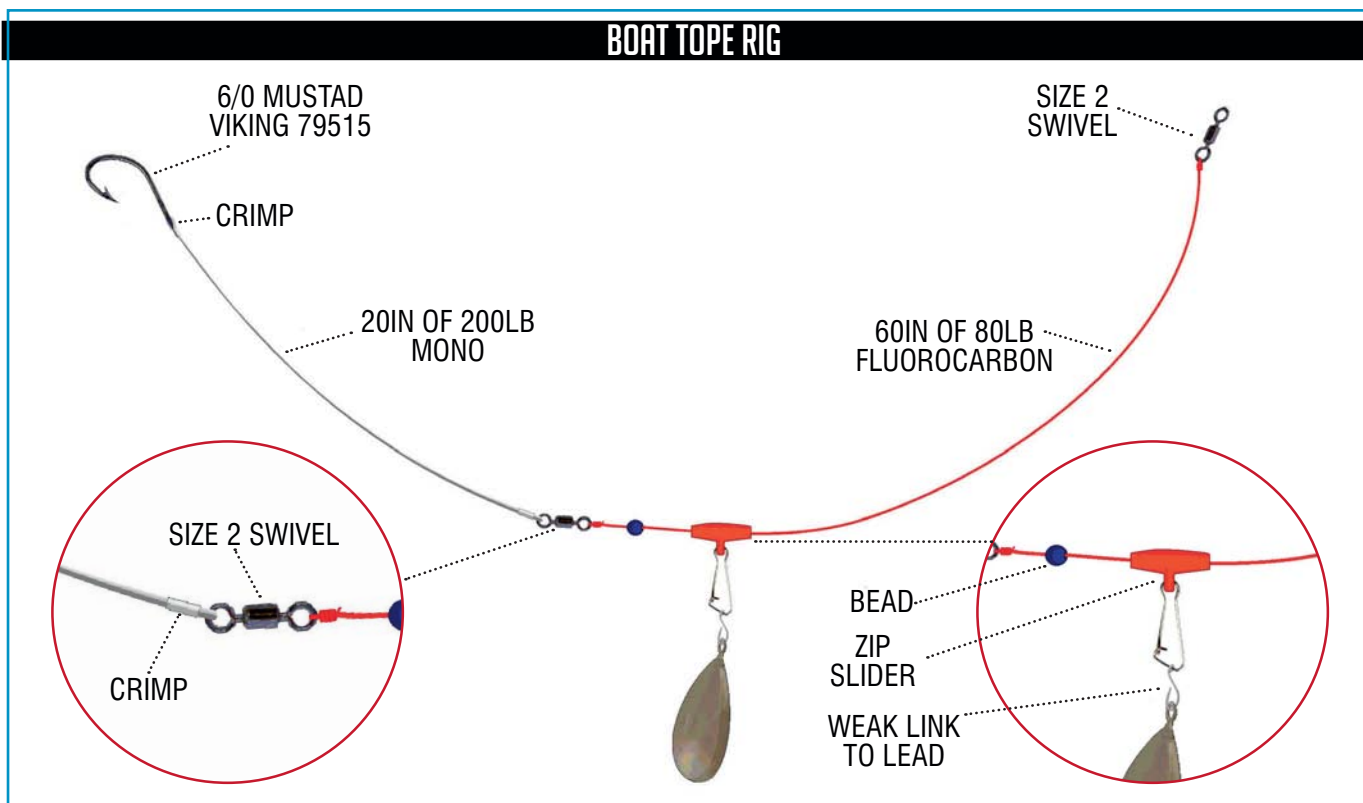
WEATHER EFFECTS

Tope tend to scatter and head out to deeper more settled water during gales and storms, especially in shallow water. They also take a couple of days to filter back inshore after the rough seas abate, but will then feed ravenously.

Ideal conditions are fairly settled weather with a light swell, and an overcast sky to limit light entering the water. Flat calm seas, even in shallow water, will not put tope off and they'll move through channels and sandbanks happily picking off prey in less than 15ft of water in daylight.

Tope will also feed well just as dawn is breaking, and again as night starts to fall. If bites are slow, a change from blue skies to cloudy or wind direction can trigger a sudden rush of bites.

BOAT TOPE RIG



The Penn Fathom 15 LD2 reel is good for bigger fish

BAITS

Mackerel is rated the top tope bait, but this is only because the majority of anglers fish it. Mackerel is good, but not as effective as a fresh head and half-body of a dab, or a head and body section from a fresh whiting. Dab and whiting are the mainstay of the tope's diet, while mackerel only come their way when dead or injured. In a straight head-to-head run, a healthy mackerel would outpace the tope every time.

Keep your baits sensibly sized. A whole mackerel is, generally speaking, too big for a tope to easily eat in one swallow. A half-fillet, half-flapper or whole small mackerel flapper is enough – any larger and the likelihood of dropped baits increases.

TACKLE

For general duntide fishing, unless you're fishing very deep water and fast tides, a 20lb class rod is perfect. Match it to a reel holding 300 yards of 20lb mono, such as the Abu 7500 Elite or Daiwa Saltist. If you're fishing over fairly clean ground, then a 12–20lb rod is the more sporting choice, but matched to the same size reel holding 15lb to 18lb line. Specialist anglers targeting very big tope use lever drag reels, and in deep water a

two-speed reel such as the Penn Fathom 15 LD2 has the power and drag capability to land very big, fast running fish.

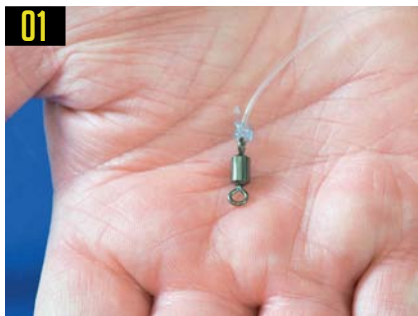
Mono is the preferred mainline. Braid is only chosen when fishing very deep water, as it can dig into itself and cause issues when a tope runs line off the reel very fast if it has been retrieved under heavy pressure, causing line breakage or the hook to pull out if it's a light hook hold. Always fish a 60lb shock leader above the mainline.



Mackerel is a popular bait, but not the most effective

+ BUILD A BOAT TOPE RIG

01



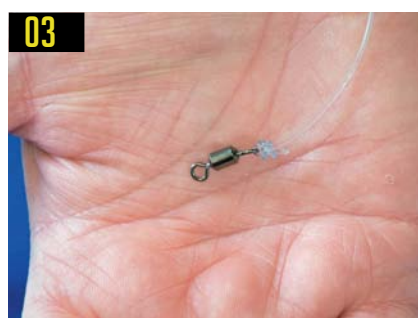
Begin with a 60in length of 80lb fluorocarbon. To one end, tie a size 2 rolling swivel.

02



Slide on a zip slider boom, followed by a 5mm bead.

03



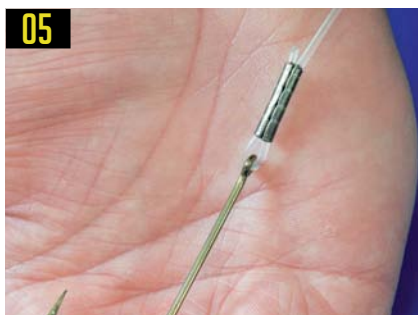
Now tie another size 2 rolling swivel to the other end of the fluorocarbon line.

04



To the lower swivel, crimp on 20in of 200lb commercial grade mono, or 15in of 50lb wire.

05



On the remaining free end of the 200lb mono, slide on a crimp and size 6/0 Mustad Viking 79515 hook, then crimp in place.

06



You can tie the lead weight to the zip slider boom with light line or telephone wire, so the weight can come off in case of snags.

Tope also take small pout flappers, poor cod, big launce, sandeel, bluey and herring baits. Squid is another good bait and works well in deeper water.

TACTICS

Try to find some specific ground feature such as sandbanks, broken ground, the edges of reefs, or even a small deeper channel that divides relatively flat ground.

Bigger tope tend to travel alone and can show up after the main flurry of bites from average sized tope have ceased. This is a great time to have a fresh bait ready and waiting; patience is the key to bagging a biggie.

Opinion is divided over whether to use wire or heavy mono to the hook. The truth is, you get fewer dropped baits when using wire than you do heavy mono, and in shallow, clear water tope often shy away from coils of heavy mono that sit over the bait. Also, the argument that mono is more humane than wire if a fish is lost does not hold up. The weak link in both cases is the hook, which will rot out quickly, regardless of line material. Big tope will also shake their heads side to side and cut through 200lb mono. They can't do this with 50lb wire, so the chances of lost fish are much reduced.

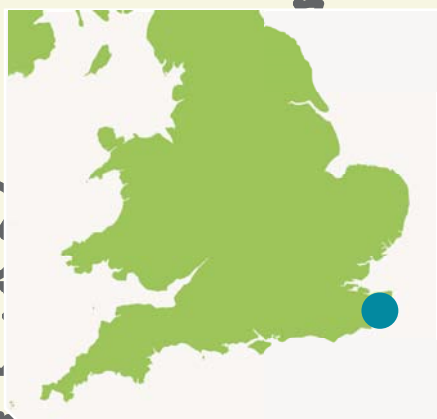
When a tope runs off with the bait, wait until the first run starts to slow, then tighten into the fish. This gets a hook hold around the lip or scissors of the jaw. If you wait for the tope to stop then run again before hitting it, it will result in deeper hooked fish.

Hook choice is also debatable. Circle hooks work, but many anglers find they fail to hook the fish, as the point can turn back into the bait and mask the point. If you prefer standard J hooks, crimp the barb down to make removal easier and cause less damage to the fish. Hooks need be no bigger than a size 6/0 Viking pattern; 8/0 and 10/0 hooks will see missed fish and dropped baits.

If a tope rolls its body in the trace, you are holding it too hard. Have your drag set at no more than half the breaking strain of the line. Let the tope run when it wants to, then pump it back towards you by lifting the rod and retrieving line on the downstroke. 🐟



MAKE YOUR MARK



SANDWICH, DEAL AND KINGSDOWN, KENT

Head to the historic Kent coastline for a spot of fishing this spring

SANDWICH BAY

HOW TO GET THERE

Sandwich Bay lies one mile north of Deal and is accessed via a public right of way by The Chequers pub. The mark is immediately behind the Royal Cinque Ports Golf Course.

SPECIES

Thornbacks appear in March and these stay around until late autumn, with the odd one still being caught in winter. Sole show from May onwards, though July to September is the best time. Bass are taken all year round, but the better fish show from late May, with June a good month. The big specimen bass are taken in September through to early December. For the smoothhound, look to May, June and early July for their numbers to peak.

September sees the start of the whiting run, with numbers peaking in November and easing away over Christmas and into January. The cod can show in September, but the best numbers occur from October through to Christmas, with the chance of a bigger fish during January.

TIDES

The best tides are the middle-sized tides rising to big springs. The smaller neap tides will fish well for the smaller species, but stick to the bigger tides for the rays, smoothhound, bass and cod.

Fish low water to high water, and the first two hours of the ebb. Some colour in the water gives the best fishing just after a spell of rougher seas. The best wind direction is from the southwest, which puts some life in to the sea with a nice surf running.

Daylight can produce if the sea is coloured, but the best fishing is always at night, especially when low water falls in the dark.

TACKLE

The ground is mostly clean, so standard 4–6oz beachcasters up to 13ft 6in, or 4–6oz European rods up to 16ft are ideal. Choose either multiplier or fixed spool reels to suit, but most experienced anglers here load with lighter 15lb line to gain more distance, with a 60lb shock leader.

The tide, on the big springs, can really push through here, so carry 5oz to 6oz release wire weights to make sure you hold on the seabed.

For the cod, bass, smoothhound and rays, most anglers use a Pennel pulley rig armed with 4/0 Viking pattern hooks. Some local anglers prefer a long and low rig when fishing whole squid and mackerel heads for the big bass.

Two-hook clipped down rigs and three-hook flappers with size 2 Aberdeen hooks are good for the smaller species such as dabs and whiting, but local anglers prefer a two-boom rig with size 6 Aberdeens for the sole.

BAITS

Peeler crab is the top bait for the smoothhound and the better bass, though a combination of yellowtail lug tipped with rag is also a very good bass bait. In the autumn, whole squid or a mackerel head with the guts trailing can find some specimen-sized bass. The sole are best targeted with ragworm or small whole blow lug. For the thornbacks, fish frozen sandeel tipped with bluey, though a mackerel and squid combination is also good.

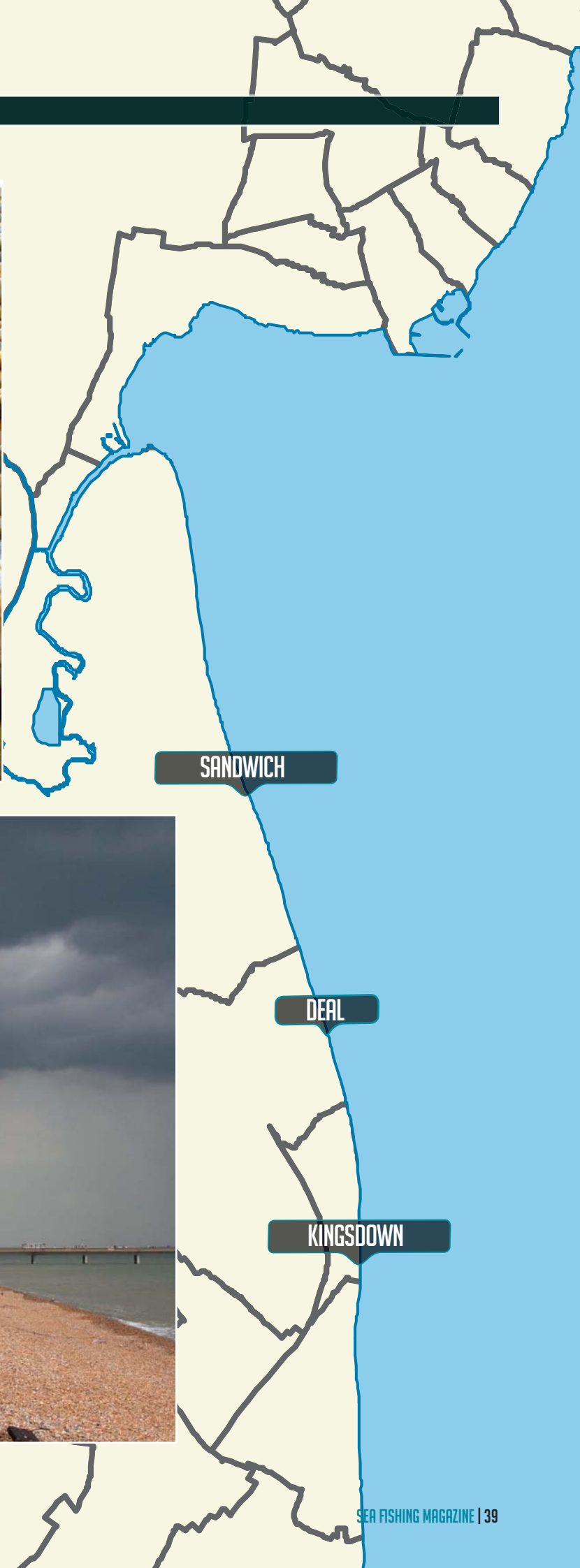
In winter, peeler crab is a consistent bait for the cod, especially after Christmas, as



Target smoothhound in late spring and early summer



The shingle beach around Deal is a great springtime mark





Deal Pier is very popular with local anglers

is yellowtail lug. For the dab and whiting fish strips of frozen mackerel, herring or bluey, or tip lug with small fish strips or squid to pick out the bigger fish.

TACTICS

The sole tend to be at medium range up to 80 yards or so out, with a calm, settled sea at night giving the best conditions. This distance is where the better winter dabs are taken too. The smoothhound tend to be at middle range, but some fish are also taken close in if the sea is not too rough.

For the bigger autumnal bass, fish no more than 30 yards out where the shingle meets the sand, with a rough sea and surf conditions producing the best fishing.

To get the best of the winter cod, cast as far as possible. Local anglers reckon the majority of the cod, and especially the bigger fish caught come at real distance, with a rough sea and coloured water at night giving the best chance. Fishing two tides after a gale goes through is said to be the optimum time.

DEAL PIER

Access from both east and west is off the A258 heading in to Deal and follow the signs for the pier. There are numerous car parks within close proximity to the pier. For opening times and prices, phone Dover District Council on 01304 363815.

Summer species include garfish, mullet, sole, thornback rays, bass, small pollack, sole, garfish and mackerel. In winter codling, whiting and dabs are the main catch. You can fish

both lower and upper decks of the pier. Local anglers favour the lower deck fishing the south and north corners, and the upper deck fishing between the second and third shelters facing towards Dover. Fish from low to high water for the best results. The ground can be snaggy in places.

Good rigs are pulley rigs for the cod, bass and rays, but for the whiting, dabs, sole choose a one up/one down rig with size 2 or 4 Aberdeen hooks. In summer target the garfish, pollack and mullet with float tackle fishing small strips of mackerel.

KINGSDOWN

Access is south of Walmer, taking the turn to the sea near The Rising Sun pub.

A steeply shelving beach backed by shingle gives mostly on to clean sand, but with the odd snag. Local anglers say it fishes best the two hours before and after high water. For general fishing, fish from one hour before low water up to two hours after high tide. It produces sole, pout, dabs, dogfish and thornback rays, and this beach is noted for big bass after rough weather during the autumn. You fish close in for these with night tides best. It also sees some bigger than average cod taken either side of Christmas in rough seas to lug tipped with squid.

Top baits are generally lug for the cod, with peeler crab and squid good for the bass, but for the rays try frozen sandeel tipped with mackerel or bluey. Fish strip works for the whiting, with summer taking ragworm or lug. ➤



The beach at Kingsdown is steep and gives easy access to deep water



Find sole on the clean sand beyond the shingle

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SHELLFISH BAITS

Mussels and razorfish are the bait of the month for **John Popplewell**

MUSSELS

The mussel is an extraordinary shellfish, part of the marine *Mytilidae* family. They are bivalves, which means that they sift their food through a syphon, filtering seawater and sifting the microscopic plankton that they live on. A mussel can actually heave itself across the seabed using an organ called a foot. This is used almost like an anchor, and is extended out, locked to the seabed and used to draw the mussel along.

Mussels can secure themselves tightly to rocks, pier piles and any other sturdy objects by secreting a viscous glue-like substance that hardens on contact with sea water. Once set, this substance looks like small hairs, and is called the beard.

Mussels will always be found on the mid to low water marks, as they must have water covering them at each high tide.

COLLECTION

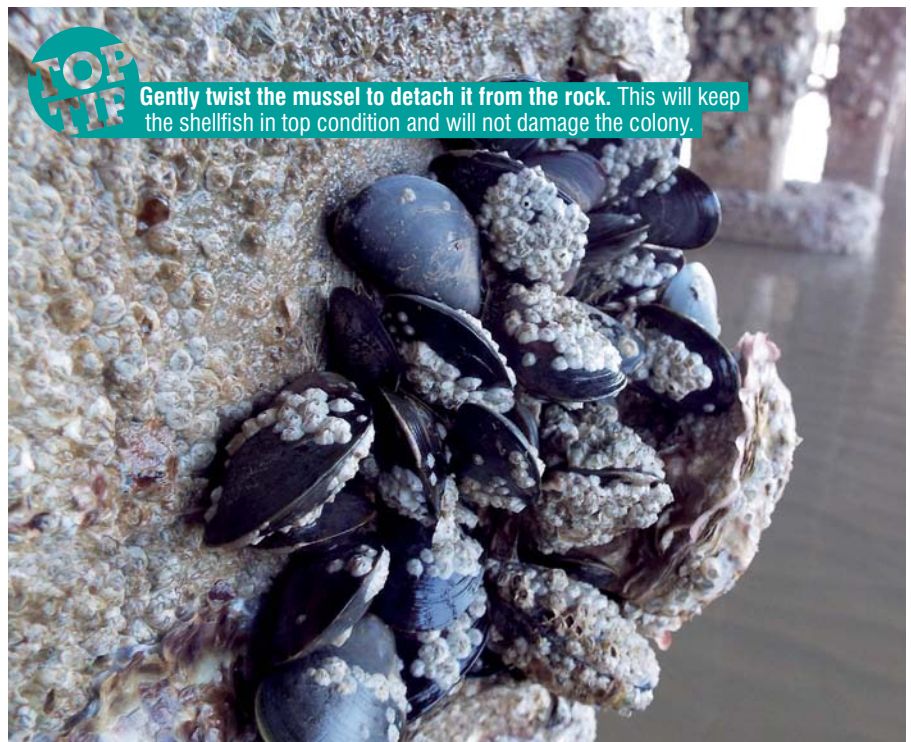
Mussels are found globally and there are many different variations. If you fancy having a go at collecting a few for bait, there are a few dos and don'ts to follow.

Do your research on your selected collection venue before you start. Most mussels are hanging from jetties, piers

and harbour walls that could be subject to local bylaws. Be economical with the amount you collect, and try to take only a few from each colony. Most mussels should detach from the rock with just a twist, and removing them carefully in

this way will allow others to colonise again quickly.

If you don't fancy collecting your own mussels, the local fishmongers and supermarkets will usually have live, fresh mussels, and they are not too expensive.



TOP TIP Gently twist the mussel to detach it from the rock. This will keep the shellfish in top condition and will not damage the colony.

STORAGE

Keeping mussels at home is not too difficult, as they will stay alive wrapped in damp seaweed or newspaper soaked in seawater.

Mussels can also be frozen. I find the best way is to take them out of their shells and lay them out on dry newspaper separately for a few hours. Wrapping them in clingfilm, I usually put three mussels in each wrap and then pop them into the freezer. I have used mussels that have been frozen for over a year and still caught fish on them. Mussels don't refreeze well, so only take as many as you think you will use.

PREPARATION

Opening the mussels is a slightly more difficult task. I will say now, please don't use a sharp knife – it will result in cut fingers. The best tool for the job is a knife with a short, blunt blade. Gradually wiggle the knife into the join at the back of the mussel and gently prise the knife all the way round until the shell is open. Then it's just a case of scooping the meat out from inside.

If you find using a knife tricky, you can always boil a kettle of water and pour it over the mussels. They will open instantly, but be careful, as you do not want to cook them in any way. We may like our mussels cooked but fish are not so keen!

The best time to do all this is the day before your fishing trip, as it can be fiddly and time consuming.

The mussels can also be laid out separately on sheets of newspaper to dry out overnight, prior to your fishing trip. This will make the skin harder so it is easier to put on the hook.

Baiting up with mussels can be a fiddly business, so it's handy to have a baiting needle as a base to wrap the elastic cotton on. Try not to wrap too tight as it can actually cut through the flesh. I find worm tipped off with mussels is a very good cod bait and can sometimes give an edge over lugworm alone.

RAZORFISH

The razorfish is another shellfish that can be found all over the British Isles, but it is slightly more difficult to obtain than mussels. Some tackle shops will



Mussels are common and easy to come by on the beach or in the shops



TOP TIP

Sprinkle a small amount of salt on your mussels once they're out of the shell. This makes them tougher and easier to bait up with.





TOP TIP

Use salt to draw the razorfish out of its hole. Once a couple of inches of shell are showing, use steady pressure to release it.



Razorfish have a distinctive long shape and pale, tender flesh

supply frozen packs and maybe a few fresh, but be prepared to go and hunt them yourself!

COLLECTION

Razorfish live in the hard, clean, wet sand on very low tide marks, and like the mussel they are a filter feeder, sifting microscopic food through their bodies. Once you have found a mark they will be there in numbers. The tell-tale sign of razorfish is just a small indentation on the surface of the sand, which at first may be hard to find, but once you get the hang of it you will be able to spot a razorfish colony easily. The really difficult part is getting them out of the sand.

Years ago, fishermen used a razorfish spear, which looked like a very slender harpoon and was pushed into the hole to impale the razorfish. Times have

changed, though, and the spear is no longer widely used.

Razorfish can now be dug up using a flat-tined fork, but by far the best (and easiest) way is to use table salt to draw the shellfish up to the surface. You can either use a mixture of salt and water in a bottle, or put neat salt directly on the hole of the razorfish and then trickle water over the top. It is then just a case of waiting for something to happen – this might take a few minutes, but eventually you will see the head of the shellfish appear on the surface. Wait until you can see at least a couple of inches

of shell above the surface. Then and only then should you grip the shell firmly,

INTERESTINGLY...

Razorfish are so named because their shells resemble traditional cut-throat razors.

but don't yank at it or you will just break the shell. Razorfish are very strong little creatures and will grip tightly under the surface. Apply steady pressure and the razor will slowly lose its grip and come free; once you get the knack it becomes easier.

Another great way to collect razorfish is to get down onto the beach after a prolonged onshore gale. They can be found washed up on the high tide marks in their hundreds, making this a great opportunity to fill the freezer up with a very good bait.

STORAGE

Razors are very easy to freeze. I roll them up in newspaper separately in packs of eight and pop them in the freezer. They will also survive for a few days just in damp newspaper or a bucket of sea water.

PREPARATION

Baiting up with razors is not as difficult as with mussels, as they have a firmer flesh. The shell will open fairly easily with a blunt-edged knife, and then it is just a case of running round the edge of the flesh to release it from the shell.

Fresh razorfish is excellent bait for all types of fish. I find that a cocktail of mussel and razor, or razor tipped with ragworm is an excellent bait for plaice and flounder. ➤

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

If you need something to help you bait up, try Tronixpro's baiting tool. Simply pop the mussel on the three needles and wrap elastic around it. Now you have a solid bait, which can be removed from the tool and easily slid onto a hook.





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An 8000 reel can hold a large amount of line

BACK UP

Cover more ground from the shore with the line-back technique

The line-back technique has been used by anglers for well over 100 years, and still has its place today. It was developed around the turn of the twentieth century to allow anglers to fish at long range on very shallow beaches. It was a popular method especially in Wales, Morecambe Bay, and on the Lincolnshire beaches where the tide can ebb out several hundred yards over what is pretty much flat, featureless sand. Anglers in East Anglia also adopted it to maximise their catches of cod from low water and through the early flood tide during the bigger spring tides.

TACKLE

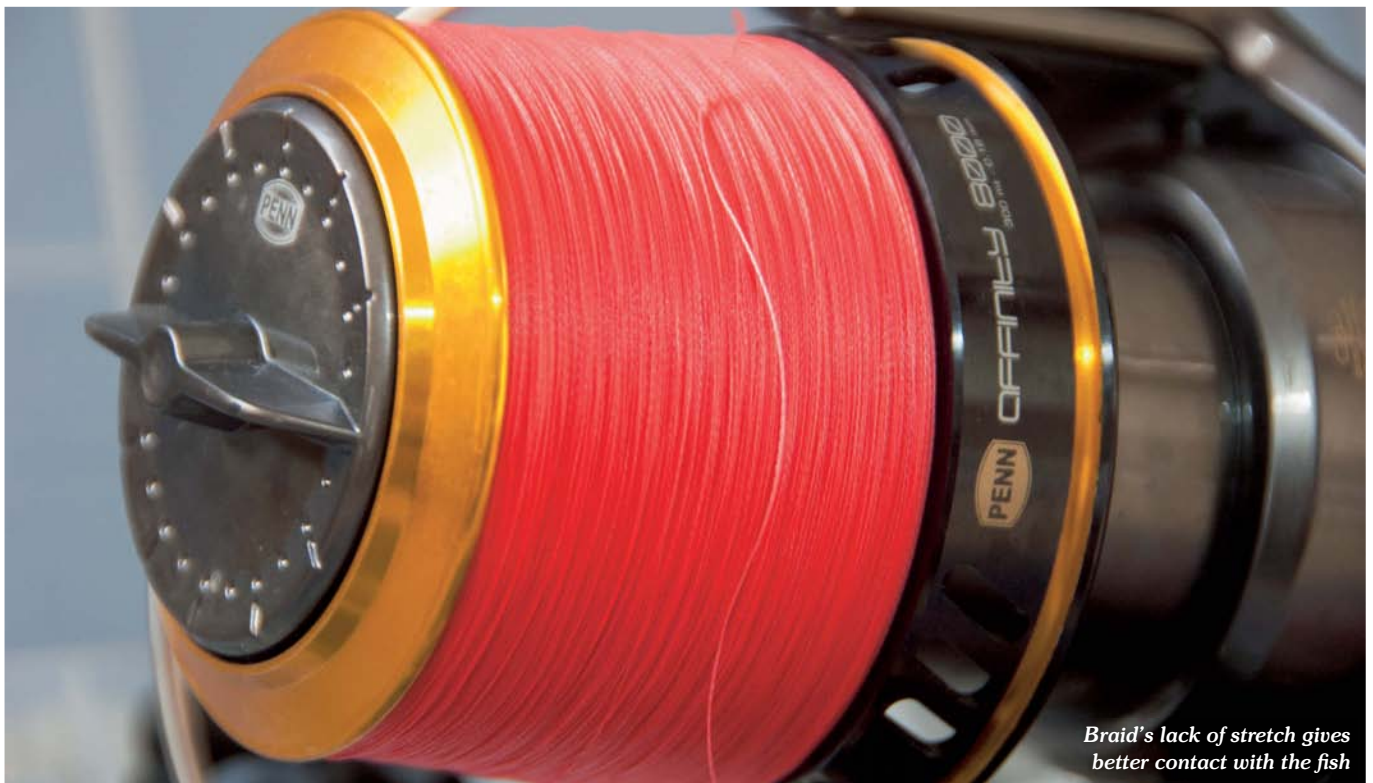
The modern longer European style beachcasters casting 4–6oz and with a length of 15ft to 16ft are perfect. They will give you maximum casting distance without the need for off-the-ground or full pendulum casting, which tend to be used by the more experienced angler, and in this situation will only gain you a relatively short distance in terms of what lining back can do.

The only reel for this type of fishing, at least to get the maximum effect, is a large 8000 size fixed spool reel. The best reels are the ones that come with a standard deep profile mono spool. This will hold

way more line than a shallow spool designed to take only braid.

To get maximum line capacity, you can fill a standard spool with 20lb mono, and an 8000 reel should hold around 400 yards of this typically 0.40mm diameter line. This should be just about enough for most line-back situations. However the alternative is to load a third of the spool with 20lb mono, then top shot with 20lb to 30lb braid. This will give you somewhere in the region of 600 to 700 yards of available line and cover you pretty much anywhere in the UK.

Braid is the best choice because it does not stretch much. This puts you in more



Braid's lack of stretch gives better contact with the fish

direct contact with the fish at long range and will dramatically improve your bite detection. Also, having a much smaller diameter for the same breaking strain in comparison to mono, it does not suffer as much from tide drag on the line. The straighter the line is in the water, the better your bite detection will be.

You still need to add a shock leader, so go with a 60lb mono shock leader for casting weights up to 6oz. Use clear mono in daylight, but a coloured leader at night so you can see the end tackle or fish coming towards you in your headlight beam.

RIGS

You can target normal species, such as plaice, dabs, flounders, whiting and codling using three-hook rigs armed with size 2 to 1/0 hooks. This method works well for thornback rays, bigger cod and bass, but you need a two-hook rig, though some still employ three hooks, and these should be size 3/0.

When targeting the bigger rays, cod and bass, the hook snoods are best made from 40lb fluorocarbon, as this is much more abrasive resistant and will withstand chafing against the teeth of the fish, or the sandpaper lips of a ray.



This method works well for thornback ray

HOW TO LINE-BACK

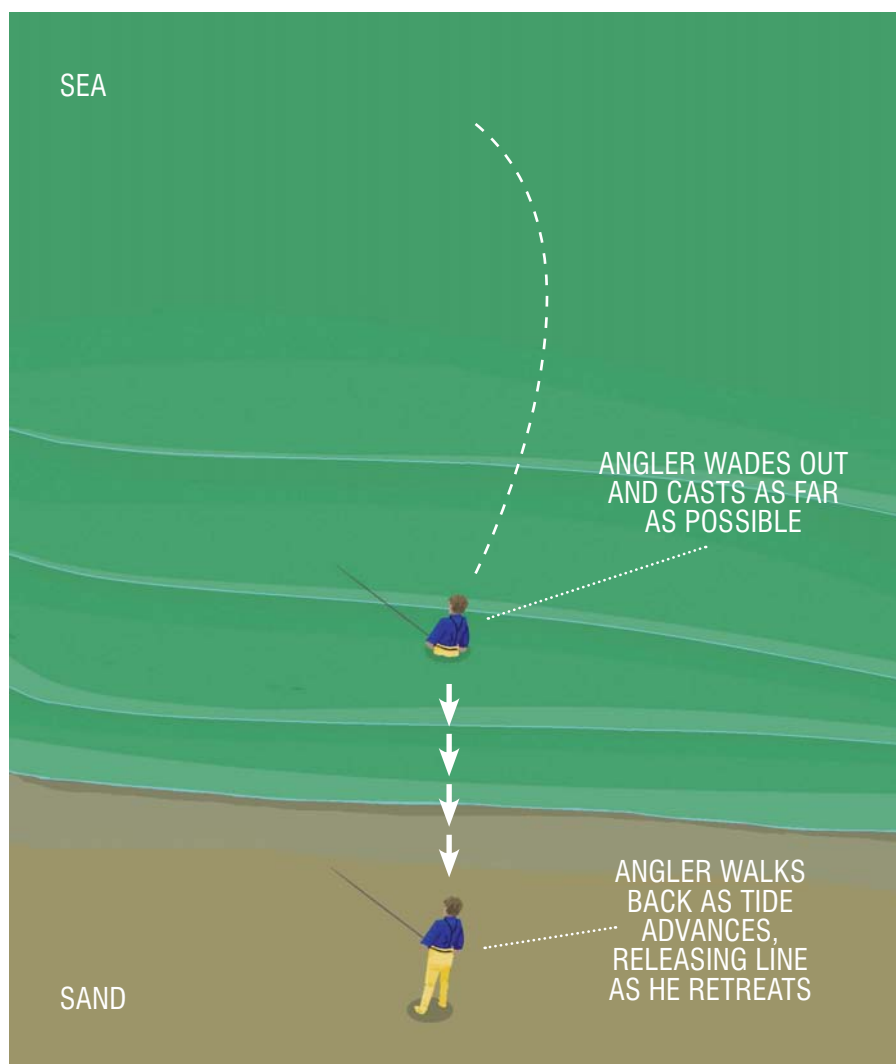
On the flatter shallower beaches, once the tide starts to flood it can race in at walking speed on the spring tides, so its best to leave your gear and rod rest well above the tide line and hold the rod, feeling for bites. Alternatively, use a push-in monopod to put the rod in, which is easier to walk back with, and lighter in weight to carry.

You wade out as far as you can, then cast normally, but as far as possible. As the tide floods in and gets to lower thigh level, open the bale-arm of the reel and, while walking slowly backwards, release line but keeping it just tight to the lead by letting it flip through a semi-closed hand. Walk backwards until you are in ankle deep water, then stay there until the water reaches your lower thigh again. You keep retreating like this, a bit at a time, as long as you can, leaving the baits where they were initially cast. This leaves them in ever-deepening water until a fish finds them.

Because you are fishing two or three hooks, when you get a bite, do not strike. Let the fish take the bait, then wait. The activity of the first fish will

TOP TIP

Chest waders should be worn when wading deep. Wellies won't cut it!



A 60lb mono shock leader is also necessary

often bring another one in to investigate. This especially applies to flatfish and whiting, but also cod, which often come through in small shoals. With experience you will come to learn the difference when first one, then two, then three fish hook themselves.

The traditional line-back method often employed heavier 8oz sinkers to guarantee the bait stayed there, but normal modern 5oz to 6oz grip leads with the wires crimped down to increase release pressure work well enough. Obviously bigger fish, such as cod and rays, will pull the weight out and these fish need to be played and retrieved as normal.

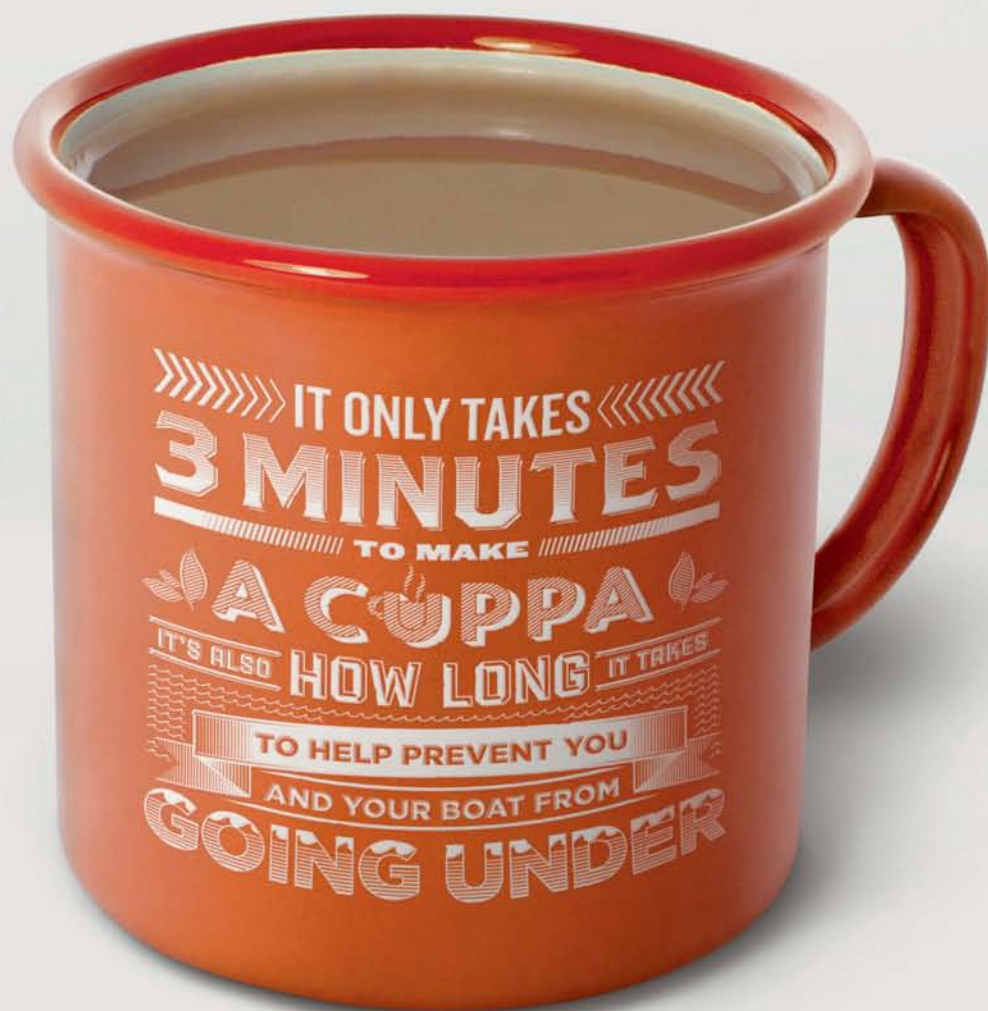
AN EFFECTIVE METHOD

In the course of lining-back, you might find yourself 400 yards or more away from where your bait is actually fishing.

You can see the advantage lining-back

gives you. If you were casting from the water's edge, even a good caster on a good day with a following wind would struggle to fish at even 150 yards. By lining-back you at least double this, and more. Keeping the bait in the deeper water for as long as possible maximises your chances of hitting fish that are reluctant to move in to very shallow water. On the flat beaches it also gives you a much better chance of catching fish like thornback rays and bigger cod, that again will rarely venture in to just a couple of feet of water. Often these fish are present on the shallow beaches, it's just that the anglers conventionally casting do not have the range to reach them.

Lining-back is a very effective method that allows you to fish very shallow beaches that normally would not produce much to conventional casting tactics. ➤



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CHECK THRU-HULL FITTINGS FOR LEAKS AND ALWAYS HAVE A MEANS FOR PLUGGING A HOLE IN AN EMERGENCY.



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CARRY AN APPROPRIATE MEANS OF CALLING FOR HELP AND KNOW HOW TO USE IT.



*Red sky at night forecasts
a period of dry and
settled weather*

WEATHER SAYINGS

FISH FINDER FILES

Learn the lessons of your ancestors to help you find your way to the fish

There are many sayings related to weather observations that have been passed down by our ancestors. Some are even quoted in biblical writings. People of previous ages, with no technology, had only their eyes and experience to judge what the weather was about to do, and critical decisions regards hunting, fishing, crop planting and harvesting relied on these sayings.

Even in this day of so called highly technical weather forecasting, the sayings of old can help anglers decipher what is about to happen and help put us on to the right marks at the right time.

“RED SKY AT NIGHT”

Possibly the most famous saying of all is: “Red sky at night, shepherd’s delight. Red sky in the morning, shepherd takes warning”.

A red sky at sunset forecasts a period of dry, settled weather with a likelihood of high pressure bringing calm sea conditions. You need to look for red sky around the sun, not red reflecting off the clouds. As the sun rises at a low angle in the east, it can reflect off cloud in the west, predicting a weather front moving in and bringing deteriorating weather and rain, hence the shepherd taking warning.

Cumulus clouds building up in the morning can warn of rain and thunder later in the day



“SEAGULL, SEAGULL, SAT ON THE SAND”

An important one for anglers to learn is: “Seagull, seagull, sat on the sand, it’s never fine weather when you’re on the land”. Seagulls know when poor weather is coming in from the Atlantic and will sit on the sand facing in to the exact direction the bad weather and strong winds will come from. This occurs about 24 hours before it hits. It’s very useful to know and an indicator to seek sheltered marks if you intend to fish the next day.

“IN THE MORNING MOUNTAINS”

Very accurate, though little used nowadays is: “In the morning mountains, come afternoon fountains”. This is an observation of cumulus clouds building in the morning as ground level heat increases and the air heats up. If the atmospheric conditions are right, the clouds increase quickly in size and form a mushroom shape. Come the afternoon, these clouds will extend to right up to the upper atmosphere and will bring rain and probably thunder. Thundery conditions are rarely good for fishing.

“WHEN THE WIND IS IN THE EAST”

Sometimes quoted by TV weather forecasters is another well known verse:

“When the wind is in the east, ‘tis neither good for man nor beast”. This is allied to our worst weather generally coming from the east. Heavy snow and ice is highly likely in the UK when a bitterly cold and strengthening east wind blows straight in from Russia and Siberia. The east coast usually gets the worst of it too. In summer though, east winds bring poor air quality with hazy skies. East winds, even for commercial fisherman, tend to bring a reduction in catches the longer it blows. The maritime fishing version goes: “When the wind is in the east, the fish bite the least”, and it’s generally correct.

“CIRCLE FORMS ‘ROUND THE MOON”

Also very accurate is the verse, “If a circle forms ‘round the moon, ‘twill rain or snow very soon”. The frontal edge or top structure of an incoming weather front will often be seen on the far horizon, or high in the sky, hours before the weather front actually hits. The cloud layer is thin, fuzzy or hazy formed from ice crystals called cirrostratus. When viewed at night, these ice crystals create what is called a lunar corona or circle of colour around the moon. This sign tells you rain is imminent, and in winter, possibly snow.



"COLD NIGHT, STARS BRIGHT"

Anglers used to fishing night tides will often be aware that on cold nights the stars appear bigger and brighter than normal. Such nights are often good for whiting and dabs. An old and simple saying quotes, "Cold night, stars bright". This occurs when the air is clean with no pollution and is likely to have moved in from the Arctic born by winds blowing from the northern quarter. Very clear skies allow the heat from the earth's surface to escape in to the higher atmosphere causing a severe drop in temperature and the likelihood of ground frost. When there is cloud cover the heat off the land is held under the cloud ceiling keeping ground temperatures up and the chance of any frost minimal. Very bright moonlight often results in poor fishing if the sea is shallow and very clear. Cloud cover can produce much better catches, as the moon is diffused or hidden reducing the light factor entering the water.



Winds from the east bring cold, harsh weather



Clear nights are cold and not the best conditions for fishing

"RAIN BEFORE SEVEN"

Though maybe not as reliable as the others quoted above, "Rain before seven, fine by eleven" is often used. This is based on the fact that low pressure weather systems move across the UK fairly quickly due to the predominantly westerly airflow coming in off the Atlantic. This relies on a weather front moving through during the morning bringing better weather behind it. Sometimes though, it can rain all night and most of the day rendering this saying less reliable, but it's more often right than not.

Passed down by untold generations, never ignore these sayings, for as we've seen, they are based on centuries of observation by people who relied on just their eyesight and day to day experience to survive. Modern weather forecasts will

always have the edge, but knowing these sayings can help predict what is about to come, especially when you're actually fishing, or about to go fishing. ➤

SFM'S PRACTICAL SAYINGS FOR SEA ANGLERS

"When the seagulls fill the skies, upon your bait must you keep your eyes."

"Your crossed lines are a crossed line."

"It's better to have a rotten bottom than no tackle."

"Good things come to those who wade."

"When in doubt, exaggerate!"



BOAT RODS

Uptide, downtide or continental? If you're in a muddle over boat rods, we're here to help...

Boat fishing is an ancient art, and while it may once have been a simple case of a hook on a line, modern rods can be a bit confusing for even the most experienced angler. Fear not – *SFM* are here to explain what different types of rod are available, and which one might be best for you.

Let's start at the beginning. First, all boat rods were big, strong downtide rods capable of hauling virtually any size fish up from the depths. After all, this was pretty much all that was required of a boat rod. Then anglers found that rods with more finesse offered more sport and enhanced enjoyment when catching fish. So after time we now have quite a selection out there from many manufacturers for just about any specie or situation required.

There are now three basic types of rods we use for boat fishing – the downtide, the uptide, and the continental.

DOWNTIDE RODS

Downtide rods are generally 6ft to 8ft long

and are rated on the pound scale to the breaking strain line they are suitable for – not, as some people might think, for how much the rod can lift, and not the size of fish you can catch with it. These weight ratings tell us what each rod is designed for, and their best applications.

Some carry a straight single rating, such as 12lb class or 20lb class. This means they are rated for that line strength only. Other rods carry a dual rating, beginning at a 6-12lb class rating, which is a light rod for use with lines from 6lb to 12lb breaking strain. It means that the tip of the rod is classed as 6lb, while the butt is classed at 12lb, with a steady progression of strength throughout the blanks. This type of rod is ideal for bream, bait fishing, wrassing, and all the species we target mainly inshore. The rod will have a light tip and a soft through action and allow use to enjoy fabulous sport with all smaller species.

We then move up the scale to the 12-20lb class. Again, this is rated 12lb in the tip and progresses through to 20lb in

the butt. This class is probably the most commonly used today, and will catch most anything save for monster fish or those in snaggy wrecks.

If you're after something for conger and heavy wrecking, then you must look at the next stage – the 20-30lb and 20-40lb classes. Rods of this class can be used for all the light stuff if needs be, and although sport is lessened they serve you well when the going gets tough.

Beyond this, we can go up to seriously powerful sticks that can be rated up to 80lb, which are for big game fishing and sharking.

UPTIDE RODS

Uptide rods were specifically designed for casting from the boat. The uptide technique is where the boat is at anchor and baits are cast well up beyond the bow and into the tide. Uptiding is a tactic mostly used for shallower waters, and it's said that the technique was developed by the great Bob Cox and John Rawle, who chartered in the Thames estuary for their fish. These two



pioneers discovered that casting away and uptide of the boat resulted in better catches.

These rods, unlike downtiders, are rated in casting weight – how much weight and bait combined the rod will cope with for casting. These rods measure in at 9ft to 11ft and begin at 2-4oz, which is for light work and can cast no more than stated. There are several other ratings, for example 3-8oz, 4-6oz and so on, right up to the standard maximum of 6-10oz. If you know you will be casting light weights and baits, opt for the lower ratings, but if you'll be banging whole squid and an 8oz lead uptide, go for the maximum rating. All the rods will cope with any size of fish; the rating doesn't have much effect on the rod's ability to land big ones.

CONTINENTAL STYLE

Continental-style rods, also known as European rods, are a fairly recent addition to the sea angler's arsenal. These rods are used mostly by top anglers who compete at an international level, as the techniques involved when using this rod can be tricky. The blanks start at around 13ft and can be as long as 16ft. The rods will generally have two or three interchangeable fibreglass tips to suit different situations, and the soft tip can go through to a seriously powerful mid-section and butt. Most are three-piece blanks with extra tips, but there are also telescopic versions.

But why are these rods so long? Well, anglers using continental style rods often need to get baits a long way from the boat, and can only underarm cast in a straight line to the body, and not from the side. A longer rod facilitates this, and having your rod tip further out actually creates more usable space for the angler. The rods are ideal for bagging lots of small species with incredibly sensitive tips and bite indication. This is how the top match boat anglers fish in competitions. Playing big fish with these blanks is possible, but it's very hard work due to the leverage effect of such a long rod. Continental rods are usually combined with fixed spool reels for ease of use and speed.

Now that we've gone over the basics, let's check out what's available on the market...

SHIMANO SPEEDMASTER AX BOAT SLIM

The Speedmaster AX Boat Slim is exactly what they say – slim, but also ultra-light. This range of rods is designed for extensive periods of holding the rod, and offers high levels of power to haul big fish out. There are three models to suit needs; the lightest is more likely to be used for enhanced sport on lighter fish, while the heaviest is more appropriate for wrecking. The power of the blank is progressive from the slender tip through to a butt with punch.

Use: Downtide **Guides:** Fuji SiC **Blank:** XT100 carbon **Sections:** 2 **Length:** 7ft 6in
Reel seat: Fuji DPS **Hand grips:** EVA **Models available:** 12-20lb, 20-30lb, 30-50lb
RRP: £189.99
Contact: Shimano ■ 0330 333 4888 ■ www.shimano.com

SONIK SK3XTR UPTIDER

This blank is designed for use with braid, though is just as happy with mono lines. It comes in two equal sections of 5ft to give a comfortable overall length of 10ft when assembled. This is a perfect length for casting, allowing you to get your baits away and uptide of the boat in shallower water. There's plenty of power to handle casting and battle big fish, as there's hidden reserves in the mid-section and butt. The SK3XTR range also includes downtide rods.

Use: Uptide **Casting rating:** 6-10oz **Guides:** SiC guides **Blank:** Carbon **Sections:** 2 **Length:** 10ft
Reel seat: Custom Sonik graphite **Hand grips:** Duplon **RRP:** £69.99
Contact: Sonik ■ 01670798910 ■ www.soniksports.com



CENTURY EXCALIBUR BRAID

The Century Excalibur Braid rods are specifically designed for use with braid lines. The Excalibur Braid has a very supple tip to accommodate the non-elastic properties of braid, and to some extent compensate for that rigidity. The power is progressive and increases in the mid-section, then rapidly increases in the butt. Ideal for any downtide scenarios, the Excalibur Braid blanks offer excellent feel, power and sporting qualities.

Use: Downtide
Guides: Fuji
Blank: Multi modulus carbon
Sections: 2
Length: From 7ft 6in
Reel seat: Fuji DPS
Hand grips: Ergonomic EVA
Models available: 12-20lb, 20-40lb, 20-50lb
RRP: £261 to £272

Contact: Century
 ■ www.centurysea.co.uk



ARTICO KRAKEN NP

The telescopic Kraken NP is entirely hand made in Italy by Artico, specifically for European waters. The rod was actually designed in conjunction with top English international angler – and England team captain – Neil Bryant. It is a very versatile rod that can be used for uptiding or downtiding, and can handle weights from 50g to 300g. It also has a grommet fixed to the first section to allow you to extend or reduce the length you fish at.

Use: Continental

Casting rating: 50g to 300g

Guides: Fuji Alconite-K or Fuji BNOG

Blank: High modulus, unidirectional carbon with two glass tips

Sections: Telescopic **Length:** From 3.6m

Reel seat: Screw

Models available:

3.6m, 4.2m

Bluezone price: £229-£285

■ **Contact:** Bluezone ■ 01752 881988

■ www.bluezonefishing.co.uk

SNOWBEE DEEP BLUE TITANIUM

Snowbee Deep Blue rods were first released 10 years ago, but they've been upgraded for 2015. While the steep-tapered progressive carbon blanks remain the same as the original version, improvements have been made to the handle and rings, making the rod even better. The handle is now one piece, removing the waisted joint of the previous range, improving comfort and strength. Innovative new ALPS solid titanium guides have been used throughout, and a Ring-Lock system prevents slippage. All Deep Blue rods are accurately rated to IGFA line classes.

Use: Downtide **Guides:** ALPS titanium **Blank:** Carbon **Sections:** 2 **Length:** 7ft 7in

Reel seat: Fuji graphite **Models available:** 8lb, 12lb (standard or 'Livebait'), 20lb (standard or 'Skad'), 30lb **RRP:** £165-£195

■ **Contact:** Snowbee ■ 01752 334933 ■ www.snowbee.co.uk

PENN RAMPAGE BOAT

The Rampage Boat is the perfect companion for the travelling angler. The four, lightweight, slim blank sections feature a modern fast taper action with supple tip, but with power feeding in quickly through the mid-section into a stiff butt for maximum pressure at full compression. There is also a braid version in the range, which has a supple tip to compensate for the non-stretch qualities of the line.

Use: Downtide **Guides:** Fuji O **Blank:** Carbon composite **Sections:** 4 **Length:** From 7ft 4in **Reel seat:** Aluminium **Hand grips:** EVA **Models available:** 12-20lb, 20-30lb, 30-50lb, 20-30lb braid **RRP:** £79.99 to £84.99

■ **Contact:** Penn ■ 01665 602771 ■ www.penn-fishing.co.uk

ABU GARCIA SUVERÄN DOWNTIDE

The legendary Suverän have been upgraded to incorporate higher specification materials in the build, and the components are better quality than ever. They are available in four lengths with sweeter, tougher actions suitable for both mono and braid. The rods have been designed and tested to destruction to give them more power and finesse than previous models.

Use: Downtide **Guides:** Fuji SiC **Blank:** 30-ton carbon **Sections:** 2 **Length:** From 7ft 9in

Reel seat: ALPS **Hand grips:** High-density EVA

Models available: 12lb (8ft 6in), 20lb (8ft 2in) 30lb (8ft), 50lb (7ft 9in)

RRP £169.99

■ **Contact:** Abu Garcia ■ 01665 602771 ■ www.abugarcia-fishing.co.uk





IMAX OCEAN SCOUT

The Ocean Scout range is one for the practical angler. At a compact 6ft, the Ocean Scout boat rods break down into three sections, so they are perfect for those who are short of space or travel a lot. The 24T HM Carbon blanks have been designed with a unique taper to optimise action and strength, and the heavy duty reel seats are satisfying to use. The series contains two models for speed jigging, and one conventional boat rod.

Use: Downtide or speed jigging **Guides:** Braid and saltwater-proof **Blank:** Carbon

Sections: 3 **Length:** 6ft **Reel seat:** Heavy duty **Hand grips:** Sure grip

Models available: 30lb (speed jigging), 50lb (boat), 80lb (speed jigging)

RRP: £129.99

■ **Contact:** Svendsen ■ 01827 59659 ■ www.svendsen-sport.com

DAIWA SUPER KENZAKI BRAID SPECIAL

The Super Kenzaki Braid Specials are well known in the boat angling world, and for good reason. These light, balanced rods have a power that belies their sleek forms, and sensitivity to match. One particularly notable feature of the Super Kenzakis is their specially designed triangular Powerlift foregrip, which gives enhanced angling and torque control. Originally designed in two equal sections, there are also three-section models available.

Use: Downtide **Guides:** Ceramic **Blank:** Carbon **Sections:** 2 or 3 **Length:** From 7ft 6in

Reel seat: Fuji fixed **Hand grips:** Powerlift

Models available: 6-12lb (7ft 8in), 12-20lb (7ft 8in), 20-30lb (7ft 6in), 30-50lb (7ft 6in)

RRP: £139.99

■ **Contact:** Daiwa ■ 01698355723 ■ www.daiwasports.co.uk



FLADEN MAXXIMUS SOLID CARBON

There are four rods in this new line of Solid Carbon rods, each comprising a two-piece modern blue and white blank, fitted with super-strong stainless steel, ceramic-lined rings. The blanks are slim and offer extreme power with sensitivity and feel, so that you can easily set hooks, drag fish from wrecks and enjoy a good scrap. These blanks really mean business.

Use: Downtide **Guides:** Ring-Lock ceramic **Blank:** Carbon

Sections: 2 **Length:** From 7ft **Reel seat:** Screw winch

Models available: 10-20lb (7ft 2pc), 15-35lb (7ft 2pc), 10-20lb (8ft 1pc), 20-40lb (8ft 2pc)

RRP: £109.99 to £119.99

■ **Contact:** Fladen on 01305 821111 for your nearest stockist





TUBERTINI GORILLA BOAT ATLANTIS

The Atlantis is an innovative and modern two-section boat rod. Light and versatile, the Atlantis features the Tubertini NICI system and telescopic handle, along with two interchangeable tips. The Atlantis can be used for both uptide and downtide fishing, and is suitable for use with braid or mono lines. It is best suited for use with a fixed spool reel, though multipliers would work well too.

Use: Continental **Guides:** Fuji

Blank: Carbon **Sections:** 2+2

Length: From 2.7m **Reel seat:** San Fu

Models available: 2.7-3.2m, 3-3.5m

RRP: £POA

■ **Contact:** Tubertini ■ 02866 347891

■ www.tubertini-sea.co.uk



BEGINNER'S ROD

Evia Warrior 180

The Evia Warrior 180 is an entry-level glass rod, which is very straightforward and designed to get you fishing with no fuss. Available in 5-10lb class and 10-20lb class at 1.8m.

RRP: £24.99

■ **Contact:** Tronixpro ■ 01903 732567

■ www.tronixpro.com

SHAKESPEARE UGLY STIK GX2

The Ugly Stik boat rods have definitely stood the test of time and are a firm favourite for many boat anglers. They have proved to be pretty much indestructible and only a few changes have been made over the years in the way of improvement. The GX2's action is perfect for modern boat anglers with smooth progressive power curves. The rod will handle pretty much everything and is best used for downtiding, though it can also be used for gentle casting uptide too.

Use: Downtide **Guides:** AOG **Blank:** Carbon composite with glass tip

Sections: 2 **Length:** From 2.31m **Reel seat:** Aluminium or graphite (model dependent)

Hand grips: EVA **Models available:** 12-20lb, 20-30lb, 30-50lb **RRP:** £49.99 to £59.99

■ **Contact:** Shakespeare ■ 01665 602771 ■ www.shakespeare-fishing.co.uk



LEEDA ICON MPR MULTI TIP

The Leeda Icon MPR Multi Tip rod gives you a choice of bite sensitivity options, allowing you to change the tip to suit your fishing needs. The tips are colour coded for ease of identification, and are light, medium and heavy respectively. The blanks are made of high modulus carbon in a high gloss finish, and the clever rings prevent line wrap. Anti-slip contoured grips provide extra comfort. Also available is a Combo set, which has interchangeable mid-sections to give all weight classes in one handy rod bundle (RRP £149.99).

Use: Downtide **Guides:** Anti-line wrap **Blank:** High modulus carbon **Sections:** 2+3 **Length:** 8ft **Reel seat:** Screw

Hand grips: Contoured **Models available:** 6-12lb, 12-20lb, 20-30lb

RRP: £79.99 ■ **Contact:** Leeda ■ 01908 442960 ■ www.leeda.co.uk



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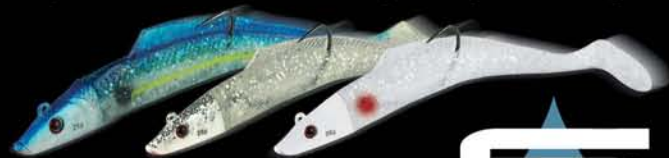
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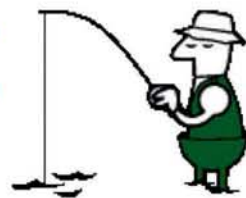
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These Pneumatic lifejackets only inflate when they're needed, which makes them more comfortable to wear when mobility is a priority – as we all know it is at sea! They're available in manual and automatic inflation models; the automatic model is activated by water pressure, not by getting wet. This means you can wear them in wet and stormy conditions without having to worry about them inflating spontaneously.

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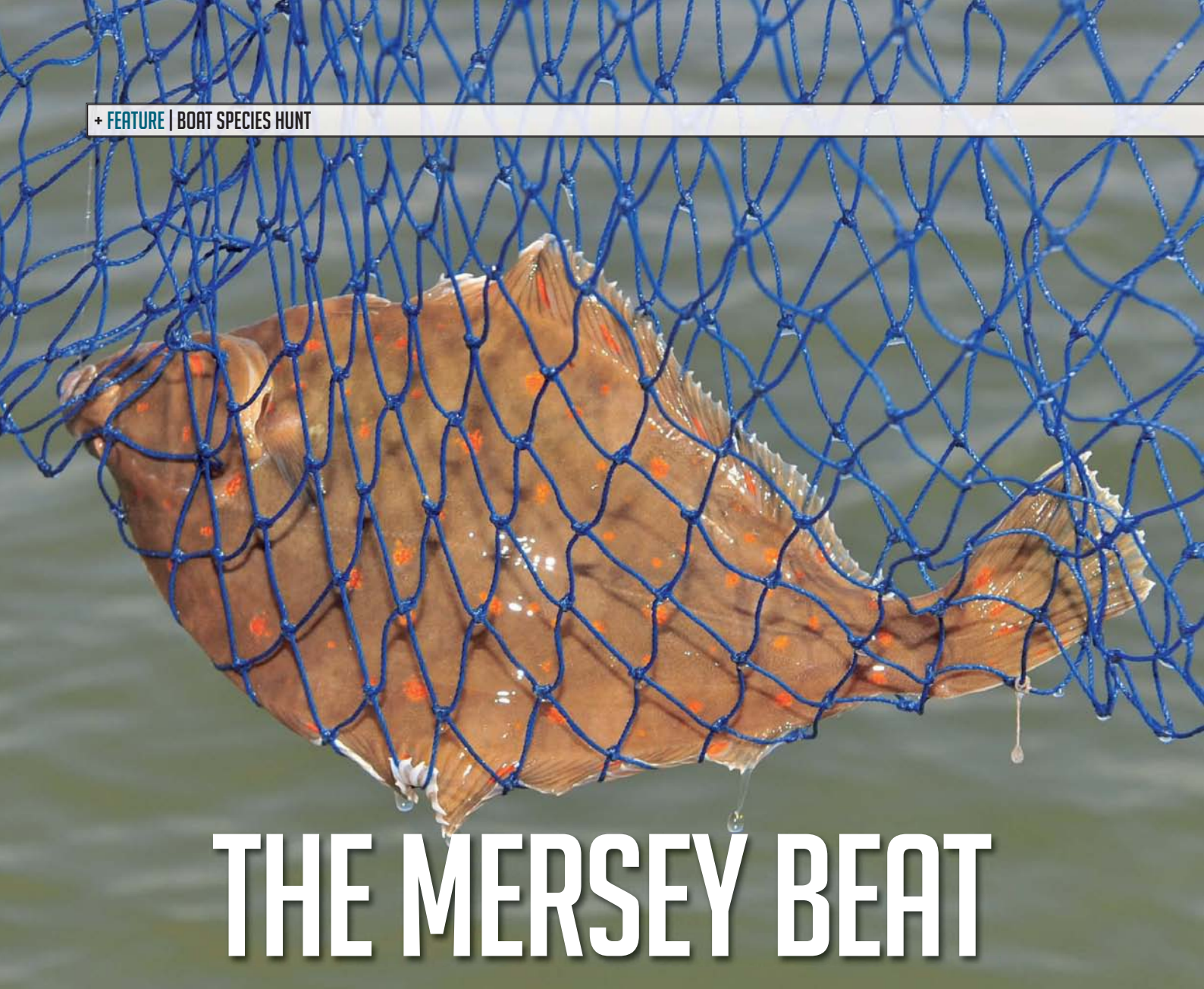


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THE MERSEY BEAT

Is it possible to catch 20 species in the Mersey over just one tide?
Simon Everett finds out...

It wasn't so long ago that the Mersey was virtually devoid of life. However, with the Cleaner Rivers campaign and industrial sites being forced to clean up their act, the pollution has been flushed out to sea. The River Mersey, along with many others, is probably cleaner now than it has been for a century and as a result the fish, instead of dying, are coming back in great numbers. For anglers, things have never been better, and the charter boats that operate out of Liverpool are in demand.

Kev McKie of *Brigand* was keen to show us the wealth of fishing the river and surrounding area has to offer, to prove that there is far more fishing in and around the Mersey than just plain old cod. Kev set us a target of 20 species in one tide – quite a challenge.

THE SECRET OF SPECIES HUNTING

Many anglers look down their noses at small species of fish, but you need good angling skills to catch them. Big fish, especially apex predators, can swim around without fear of being eaten, but small fish don't have that luxury so it can be harder to coax them onto a hook.

The ability to target different species at will is a mark of experience and skill. The secret is to be able to select the appropriate rig and bait for the ground and the fish that are likely to be there.



MIDDLE DEEP TO KING'S LAKE

We started out on the last of the flood tide, and got our first baits in the water as the flow was easing towards the top of high water. At this stage we were targeting the estuary dwelling species. We had anchored on the Middle Deep, just off the main channel where the mud bank falls away to harder ground in the deeper water. It produces flatfish and rays, as well as cod and whiting. The skipper showed his worth with the first species of the day, a double shot of whiting on ragworm, fished on a one up one down flowing trace rig. This is a good all round presentation for a species hunt.

As we were so close to the mud flat, Gavin Parker cast towards the softer ground in the hope of a thornback or flounder on peeler crab, or sole on his second hook baited with a small piece of lug tipped with peeler crab legs. It was a tactic that paid off – his rod nodded and the flounder we needed came to the net.

With the tide flow coming to halt, we decided to move on. Our next mark was the Tranmere Shore, close to the old jetties. A mussel bed has become established there, which attracts silver eel, flounder and sole. We had the flounder, but needed an eel. Crab was the bait for the job, and I used it well to hook a cracking eel of around 3lb, but as it came to the net the hook broke at the bend. Words were spoken that cannot be printed! Thankfully, Kev Martland made up for my mishap with another eel before I had time to tie another hook on. With three species down and seventeen to go, we needed a plaice next, and the skipper knew just the spot.

We dropped down the tide to just off the King's Lake slip, where there is an even larger mussel bed. This is a mark that is renowned for throwing up plaice, so Mark Viercant used a wishbone full of beads and sequins, while I tried a Rauto spoon on a flowing trace. Local knowledge dictated that we use crab for the plaice here, not ragworm. Sure enough, it worked and Mark brought decent plaice to the boat for Kev to deftly net aboard.

FROM 5 TO 15

With the tide dropping fast, Kev was keen to get out to the wind farm marks to get the count up on some baitfish species.

The sandbanks are home to thousands of sandeels, plus weavers, dab and gurnard, all of which you can catch on sabikis fished within touching distance of the bottom. Things didn't go according to plan, though; after a couple of drifts we had absolutely nothing between us, so we decided to shift to a nearby wreck and see what we could wrinkle out.

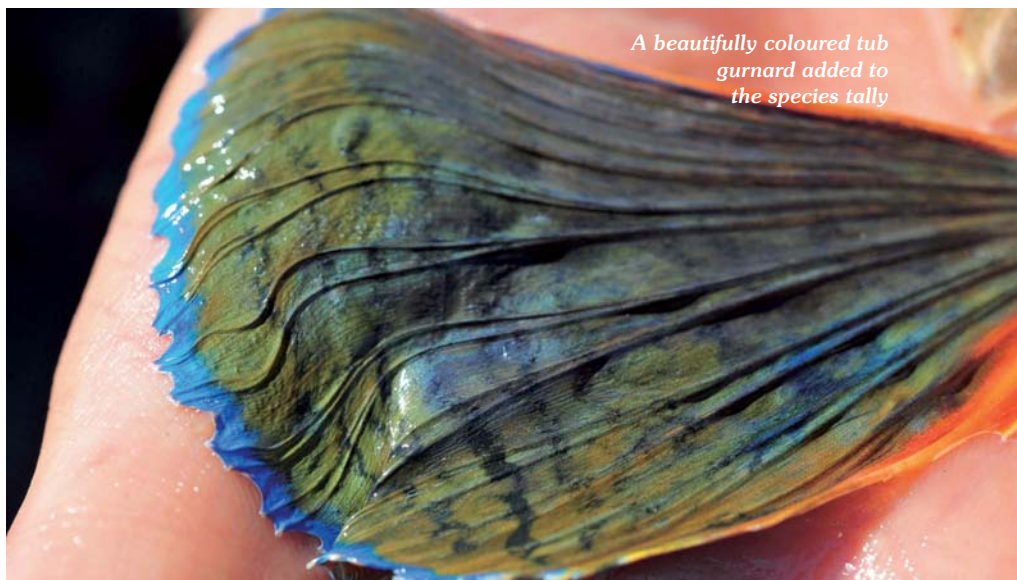
The wreck was only 10 minutes away, and the same sabikis and some hokkais were used. Almost immediately we more than doubled our score with pouting, pollack, poor cod, mackerel, all three species of gurnard coming aboard in the space of about five minutes. The next drift produced a couple of decent fish in the shape of a 6lb ling, a 4lb cod and a few pollack, proving that species hunting is not just about mini species, even if they do make a valuable contribution.

From a bit of struggle on just five species we were suddenly on target with 15 species ticked off our list, and that was without a sandeel or any other mini species. That changed when a sabiki

rig accounted for a nasty, but in the circumstances welcome, lesser weever. This is a fish all anglers need to be able to recognise as it has venomous, yellow spines in its black dorsal fin.



This 6lb ling was caught on the drift



A beautifully coloured tub gurnard added to the species tally

LESSER WEEVER

The lesser weever is found all around the UK. It lives in deep water in winter but moves inland during the summer, where it buries itself in the seabed with only its eyes and poisonous spines protruding. Anglers often catch these fish on mackerel feathers, but they will also take small baits such as ragworm.

A sting from the lesser weever will become red, inflamed, swollen and incredibly painful. After a couple of hours the pain will subside, and it should be gone completely with 24 hours.

The best way to treat a sting is to immerse the affected body part into water as hot as you can stand, as the poison is protein-based and can be broken down with heat. Medical attention should be sought if the victim is a child, elderly, or has an underlying health issue.



Dogfish were unusually difficult to find

WHERE ARE THE DOGGIES?

With 16 species now over the gunwale, there were a few notable absences. Trying crab on a running ledger drifting past the wreck and onto the rough ground should have produced a wrasse, dogfish or bull huss, but they weren't at home. Another move, back into the banks, was decided upon.

Anchored amongst the banks the target now was a smoothhound on crab or squid, tope, huss and the still missing dogfish. We each targeted a different species as time was ticking by and we had still four species to get to hit our target of 20.

I don't know about you, but I found it incredible that we had gone all day without catching a single dogfish. Isn't it just typical that when you want one you can't find it for love nor money, but when you are after something else you can't move for them. This situation changed on the first cast over the banks when, like buses, two came along at once on the same two hook rig.

TOTTING UP

Smoothhound abound on these banks. Closer in they prefer crab, but out on the clean ground squid is the most successful bait. Sure enough, it wasn't long before Mark was playing a lively fighter on his fixed spool outfit and species number 18 was lifted aboard,



Simon's tiny tope took the crew to their 20 species target

a starry smoothhound that had taken a whole squid. Things were looking very promising, and there were still any number of possibilities to fill the remaining two places on the score card – turbot, sole, bass, garfish, scorpion fish or bullhead, launce, sand smelt, scad, bull huss, herring, rockling, conger, thornback, dragonet – all of which often put in an appearance amongst the fish caught on *Brigand* but had yet to show on the day.



Kev brought in a small thornback



A bull huss takes a large fish bait



The Mersey has a number of prolific marks

ONE FINAL PUSH

When things don't quite go as easily as planned, you have to up your game and try more specific tactics. Mark Viercant put a mackerel tail section on a 6/0 hook, aiming for a tope or bull huss, and let it fly 50 yards out to the side of the boat. In this shallow water the scare area of the boat had to be avoided by casting well away from it. Meanwhile, we each tried something different in an attempt to put another species on the

list. Kev Martland stuck with his crab in hopes of a ray, skipper Kev was using worm to try for another flatfish species, while I had a squid out for a tope.

In a fortuitous turn of events the crab did the job and Kev brought a small thornback in through the building tide. We just needed one more to reach the target we set ourselves. It fell to me to catch the last fish of the day and to sign off the twentieth species. I was using a small multiplier, 1600 size, and a light

but strong spinning rod to fish a squid on the bottom in the hope of a bass or small tope; when my rod bounced everyone was willing it to be one or the other. It turned out to be the smallest tope I have ever caught. I doubt it weighed 1lb, but it was most definitely a tope and it was the final piece in our self-set puzzle to show the variety of species that now inhabit the Mersey estuary and the sandbanks just out of the mouth. ➤

MONTHLY RIG

BOAT TWO-BOOM ATTRACTOR RIG

Tempt even the fussiest of eaters with the two-boom attractor

This rig was adapted from the two-boom shore rig, but is designed for drift fishing over clean and mixed rough ground.

The two booms stand out from the rig body line, minimising the chance of tangles, making this rig ideal for fast dropping to maximise time when passing over prime ground or shoaling species.

The rig also incorporates attractors, which appeal to species such as gurnards,

flatfish, small ling, codling, plaice, megrim and smaller turbot. This is an all-round rig capable of catching pretty much anything that swims, and is a must-have for any boat angler's rig wallet.

HOW IT WORKS

The two-boom presentation sees the lower boom fishing one bait hard on the seabed, which will target flatfish but also pick up gurnards and other bottom

dweller such as haddock, codling, whiting, and even rays and turbot. The higher boom puts a bait up in the water and will tend to take fish such as small ling, pouting, pollack, coalfish, cod and bream that shoal and feed slightly up off the seabed.

The sliding Powergum stop knots allow some adjustment to suit bites. If the majority of your fish are coming to the bottom bait, you can slide the lower boom

01 Begin with 45in of clear 60lb mono. At one end, tie a Salt lead link.

02 Slide on a 3mm rig bead, a Salt shore boom, and another 3mm bead. Repeat.

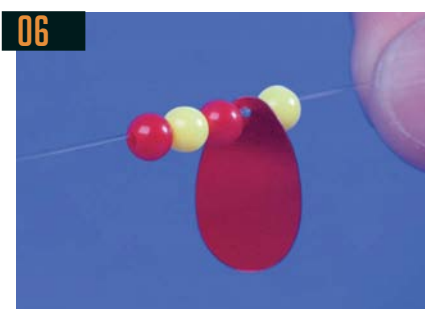
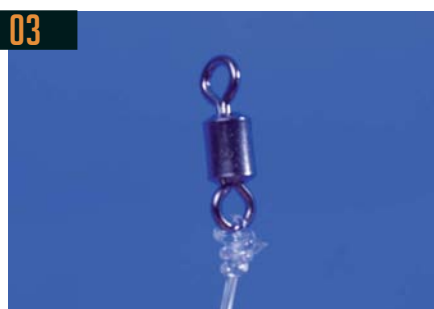
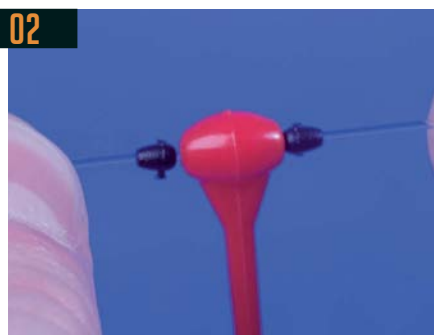
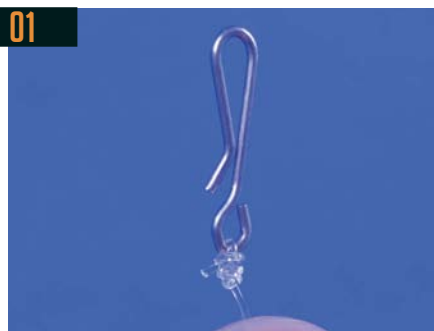
03 Finish the main rig by tying a size 4 rolling swivel to the free end of the 60lb mono.

04 Slide the top boom up the rig body to a position about 34in above the lead link, and above and below the two 3mm beads use 22lb Powergum to add six-turn grinner knots as stops.

05 Also add Powergum stop knots either side of the lower boom and 3mm beads. Position this boom about 6in above the lead link.

06 The two hook traces are each made from 12in of 25lb fluorocarbon. Onto each trace, slide on a 5mm bead, a small red or silver plastic spoon, and three more coloured beads.

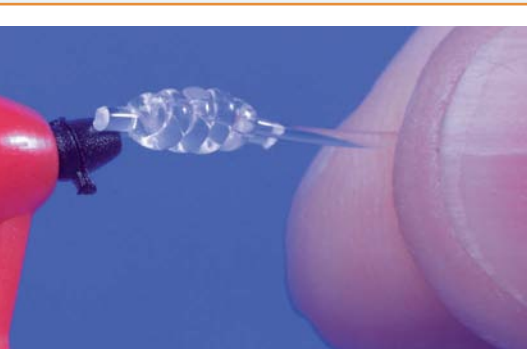
07 Finish each hook trace by tying on a Kamasan B940 Aberdeen hook size 2.



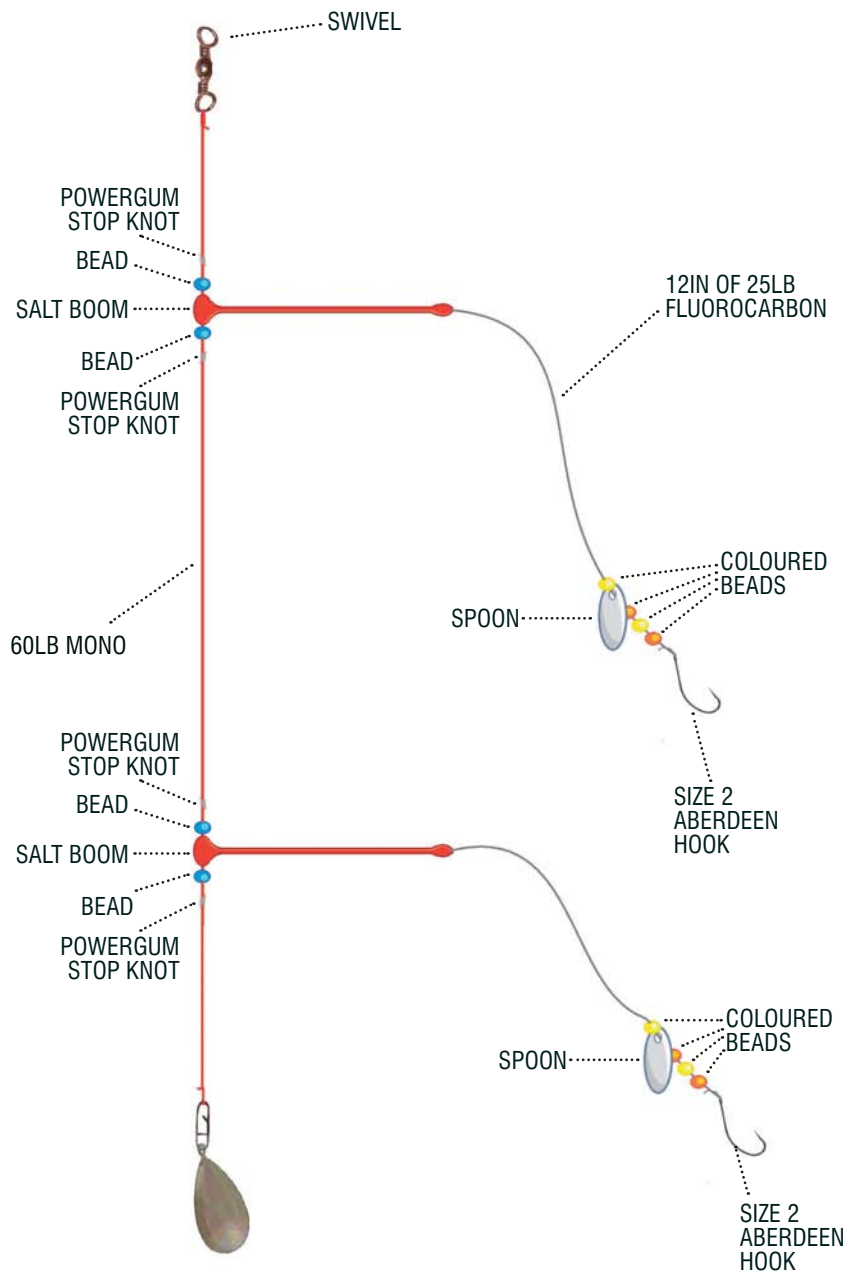
BOAT TWO-BOOM ATTRACTOR RIG

down to sit tight behind the lead weight, but also bring the top boom down to sit above the lower one, bringing it into the feeding zone. If most fish are taking the top hook, slide this up to sit just under the top connector swivel, then reposition the lower boom in the middle of the rig. This again gets two baits in the feeding zone.

The choice of bead colour is optional. However, in shallow, clear water, coloured combinations such as alternate red and



07



yellow or red and white work well, but in deeper water change the beads for luminous yellow or white. Also note that the spoon sits below the single top bead, with three beads below. This is deliberate as the weight of just one bead does not stop the spoon revolving when water pressure is added. If you use more than one bead, then water pressure and the weight of the beads will restrict the spoon from turning.

Keeping the hook traces under 12in reduces tangles when dropping the rig at

speed. The Salt boom is also quite stiff and ideal for this type of drift fishing, again massively reducing tangles.

Over rougher ground, fish the rig more vertically with less line out and you'll present baits hard on the bottom and 3ft up in the water, which will pick up both bottom feeders and fish further up in the column. Over clean sand, try letting much more line out and shallowing the angle of the line as it enters the water. This will put both baits close to the seabed where the majority feed. ➤



PHIL'S FLUKE FLOUNDER

A bad case of tangled lines led to a great catch for Phil Venables, tells **Barney Wright**

How many times have we heard that a miscast, a tangle and bait left in the surf has led to a superb fish? Well, countless is the answer. A typical scenario is when a dad and his lad are fishing together – the dad wallops his bait out of sight, while the youngster uses some cruddy old boat reel not meant for casting and a rotten old rod to play with in the surf. A big lump of mackerel is wedged on a size 3/0 and that's about it. Then suddenly the kid is latched onto a decent bass, which is giving him the run-around – towing the poor wee fellow up and down the beach. Dad eventually and masterfully takes control to be sure the prize is beached, and everyone's happy. But why didn't the dad fish the surf in the first place? There's a lesson to be learned here for sure.

MISS AND HIT

Recently I set out on a fishing trip with my good mate Phil Venables, which saw us at Dungeness in Kent during a dab fishing competition. We were only casting 50 to 70 yards out, as anything further only produce whiting. The tide was also incredibly fierce, so we prudently stayed close in for the majority of the time. Then thing got interesting, and something happened that in all my years I had never even heard of, let alone witnessed.

Phil is a ground caster, and even when he's lobbing a few yards he tends to lay the bait on the beach for casting. He uses a wide arc, and therefore needs quite a bit of room to manoeuvre for his cast. But he had a habit of not giving himself enough room and a couple of times I noticed that his trace was precariously close to my running line. Eventually my fears were realised and, on one particular cast, Phil's trace snagged mine and virtually wrenched my rod out of its rest.

I thought it was all over – my line would be broken, Phil's trace would

be lost to sea and a complete restart needed. Well, what happened next beggars belief. I quickly realised that my line hadn't parted and Phil's trace had gone about 25 yards out to sea.

In the time it took me to pick up my rod, begin a retrieve and say to Phil: "Reel in mate, you're still attached," Phil's rod was nearly yanked out of his hands.

He thought that I had tugged his line, or a lump of weed or some object had snagged him. That was until he saw the tail of a huge flatfish boil up in front of him. It was either the biggest dab I'd ever seen, or a good plaice or cracking flounder.

PERSONAL BEST

Drawing the fish to shore took some coordination, as we had to ensure that one line didn't cut off the other, allowing the fish to escape. Eventually a writhing and tangled mess was crashing into the shingle and Phil's fluke fish was landed. It was in fact longer than the measuring stick, which meant it had the dimensions of a 4lb flounder. However, when we weighted it the fish came in at 2lb 2oz – it was obviously spent after breeding had come back in to shore for a good feed up. It was a new PB for Phil, and caught in the most remarkable way.

After a few minutes of attempted untangling, we had to give up and sacrifice Phil's rig with scissors. After all, I still had bait out there and my line was being dashed on the pebbles. Phil is known for his economical approach to fishing and having to snip off the hook lengths was hard for him. To add insult to my injury, Phil was using bait that that he'd swiped off me – some superb queen cockle that I'd collected on a previous session! However, his reward of a superb flattie more than enough made up for his rig loss.

With tongue in cheek, Phil announced after the session that he was setting up a casting and catching flounder clinic. I wonder if anyone will sign up?

LESSONS LEARNED

So a messed up cast and a rig trace that had barely reached the seabed resulted in one of the quickest and most unlikely takes I've ever witnessed. I reckon the trace actually hadn't had a chance to settle at all; the fish was probably right

there and even in the cloudy water identified an easy meal.

The lesson is that maybe we should fish more regularly at our feet, especially at venues with relatively deep water and fast tides. It is more common for a bass to fall to this tactic, but now we know it works for flounder too! ➡



Phil's fluke flounder was a PB and a great surprise

ANGLER PROFILE

Name: Phil Venables

Age: 56

From: Maidenhead

Years fishing: 49 years, but with a regretted 12 year break

Favourite fish: Dover sole

Favourite venue: Dungeness or Southwold

Shore or boat: Both

Best or most notable catch: 62 dab in one session from Dungeness.

Dream destination: Norway – I'm all booked for next year!

Top rod: Daiwa TDPK

Top reel: Shimano FS

SO ICONIC...

Gareth Davies gets to grips with the Leeda Icon Bass rod

Let me start by saying that this rod surprised me. At under £50, you wouldn't expect too much, but I have to say that the Leeda Icon Bass punches well above its price tag. Slick looking and remarkably powerful, this 11ft 6in rod is certainly up to the job of shore bass fishing.

QUALITY BUILD

The Icon Bass is rung for use with both multiplier and fixed spool reels, and the full SiC guides in the rings help the line peel through with no issues and no catching.

Nicely balanced and well spaced, the rod has a black whip with gold thread finish, giving it a no-nonsense look that

appeals to me aesthetically.

The reel grip is a treat to use, nicely finished with a gold metal band, again giving the rod a unique look. The narrow butt adds to the quality look, while the Japanese shrink wrap on the handle gives good grip and a warm, comfy feel when loading the rod up.

GETTING TO GRIPS

Without getting too techy, I was pleasantly surprised with the amount of power this rod could soak up and, in return, use to fire the lead a good 100 yards with a very basic off the ground cast. When pulling the tip around, it looks like the action is all taking place at

tip of the rod. However, when you start to cast, the rod reveals that it actually has a decent through action.

I started off with a 4oz lead, which was handled easily by the Icon Bass, without any major stress or drama. The lead did actually pull off to the right slightly on each cast, showing that it could take more power in the cast (or my timing was slightly out).

After a few chucks with the 4oz, I stepped up to the 5oz just to see how the rod would cope. I was pleased to find that, after a few goods whacks, the Icon Bass didn't fold or give up the ghost like some comparably priced bass rods would.

When darkness fell, it was time to put



SPECIFICATIONS

Applications:

Bass fishing from the shore

Float or mackerel fishing from the pier

Thumbs up:

Powerful for its size

Excellent value for money

Thumbs down:

Tip must be pushed in very firmly to stop it twisting out of alignment with the butt

Technical Specifications:

RRP: £49.99

Sections: 2

Length: 11ft 6in

Casting weight: 2-4oz

Guides: SiC

Reel Seat: Screw lock

Handle: Shrink wrap

Tip: Glow

Contact: Leeda 01908 442950 www.leeda.co.uk



The Icon Bass is a strong rod at a nifty price

a few worms out to see what was feeding down on the Gower coastline. With three-hook flappers coupled to 110g grip leads and a whopping spring tide, it was a pleasure to fish with the Icon Bass, and I ended up taking whiting, flounder and small school bass at all distances with not a hint of drama. The glowing

tip section worked a treat too, indicating bites clearly. I opted for a fixed spool loaded with 12lb line, which I felt would be more user-friendly given the through action of the rod.

THE VERDICT

All in all, I must give the Leeda Icon

Bass the thumbs up. If you're after a rod that won't break the bank, and enjoy light fishing for bass or just scratching away for shy biting fish, then this is a good rod to consider. It's nicely finished and made by a reputable manufacturer – what more can I say? Enjoy the Icon Bass. ➤

TOP GEAR



Our top pick of rods, reels, and everything else...

FLADEN MW MAXIMUS ROD

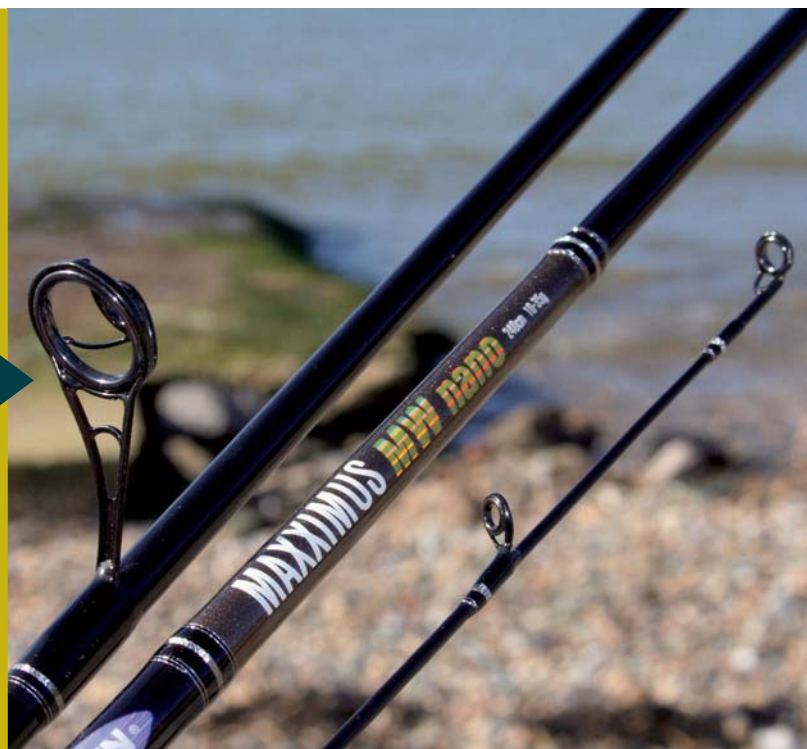
RRP FROM £89.99

Fladen Maximus rods have proved to be hugely popular with experienced anglers and beginners alike. As such, Fladen have recently expanded and improved the range to include a new set of spinning rods – the MW Maximus range. These exceptional new rods are packed with innovative technology, including the inventive American Tackle Micro Wave rings. These rings actually contain two guides – a smaller guide set within a larger one. While this may seem strange, it actually stops the line speed from slowing down too quickly, making for longer, smoother, more accurate casts. The Micro Wave rings also reduce wind knots when using soft braids.

The MW rods are manufactured using modern nanotechnology, and much stronger than regular graphite rods despite being lighter and thinner. With a high tensile strength and great resistance to external impact, the rods also split into three pieces for easy transportation.

Available in three sizes: 2.1m 5-25g (from £89.99), 2.4m 10-35g (from £94.99) and 2.7m 10-40g (from £99.99).

- Contact: Fladen
- 01305 821111
- www.fladenfishing.org.uk



HTO WEEDLESS WORM HOOKS RRP £1.80

These hooks are exactly what you need when fishing Texas style with soft plastic worms. When the hook is fixed properly on the worm, it can be set up so that the hook point is protected from snags and weed, which means you can work the lure through areas where fish hide out without becoming snared.

■ Contact: Tronixpro ■ 01903 732567 ■ www.tronixpro.com



SAVAGE GEAR FINEZZE HD4 BRAID RRP FROM £14.99

Savage Gear certainly did their homework with the Finezze braid. Hours of controlled testing and digital fine-tuning have resulted in a tightly pitched, ridge-surfaced line with a round profile and minimal torque. Enhanced knot strength and abrasion resistance give a reliable braid that won't let you down and added UV protection rounds out the package. Also available in HD8.

■ Contact: Svendsen
■ 01827 59659
■ www.svendsen-sport.com



SASAME P-382 TWO-WAY T-ZONE BEADS BLUEZONE PRICE £3.75

Sasame's clever little beads have a fine wire stand-off connector and tubing to attach hook lengths that sit away from the main line. They are designed to rotate the snood around the rig body, preventing tangles and ensuring neat presentation.

The two-way beads have two holes in them: one vertical through which the mainline is threaded, and one horizontal for the hook length. This allows for adjustability and easy swapping of hook lengths.

Available in sizes S-L to allow for different diameters of line. Pack of six.

■ Contact: Bluezone
■ 01752 881988
■ www.bluezonefishing.co.uk

FIIISH BLACK MINNOW OFFSHORE COMBO RRP FROM £5.49

The Fiiish Black Minnow has been a hit across the Channel for years, and now this French favourite is making a splash here in the UK too. The Black Minnow consists of three separate parts: a weighted jighead, a weedless hook and a soft plastic body. Bought in this handy combo pack, the Black Minnow comes ready-rigged, so all you need to do is attach it to your line. The different elements are also available separately. The Black Minnow is available in a range of sizes, so there's a lure for every sea fishing occasion. The Offshore range, pictured, is perfect for both boat and kayak fishing.

■ Available from www.basslures.co.uk. For trade enquiries, contact Topwater lures on 01619 421011 or email info@topwaterlures.co.uk.





SKEE-TEX MOOCHAS

RRP £13.95

These are perfect for quickly slipping your feet into during the summer time sessions. The MOOCHA is ideal for mooching around in, and they're so light and comfortable you won't even know that they are on your feet. They float in water and are spot on for the angler travelling to sunnier climates this year! Available in sizes 7-8, 9-10 and 11-12.

- Contact: Skee-Tex
- 01268 768282
- www.skee-tex.co.uk



COX & RAWLE HOOK SNAPS

RRP £2

These links are ideal for attaching lures to for bass, pollack and wrasse fishing, as you can switch lures in a moment to suit conditions or fish targeted. They are strong, light and reliable. You can also use them for attaching small leads to when casting into the surf or as a slider when boat fishing. Available in sizes 2 to 8. Pack of 15.

- Contact: Cox & Rawle
- 01964 41323
- www.coxandrawle.com



ASSO ULTRAFLEX 40Z SPOOLS

RRP £11.99

Asso's excellent mono works well as a shock leader as well as a mainline. Soft and supple, Ultraflex is strong and abrasion-resistant and is great for knotting. It's available in a wide range of breaking strains from 20lb to 80lb, and is ideal for any kind of rig body, from lightweight European-style rigs right up to heavy rough-ground ones. Also available in 50m bangles.

- Contact: Asso
- www.assouk.co.uk

TF GEAR SAND EEL COOL POUCH

RRP £14.99

When you want to keep your baits fresh at the beach or on the boat, the TF Gear Sand Eel Cool Pouch is a handy and effective solution. Perfect for short sessions, the pouch has a divided interior so you can portion out your baits. It's generously sized without being cumbersome so you can leave the heavy coolbox at home. The pouch is lined with insulating thermo-foil to keep your baits cool and in great condition. Dimensions: 30cm x 26cm

- Contact: TF Gear
- 08719 117045
- www.totalfishinggear.co.uk



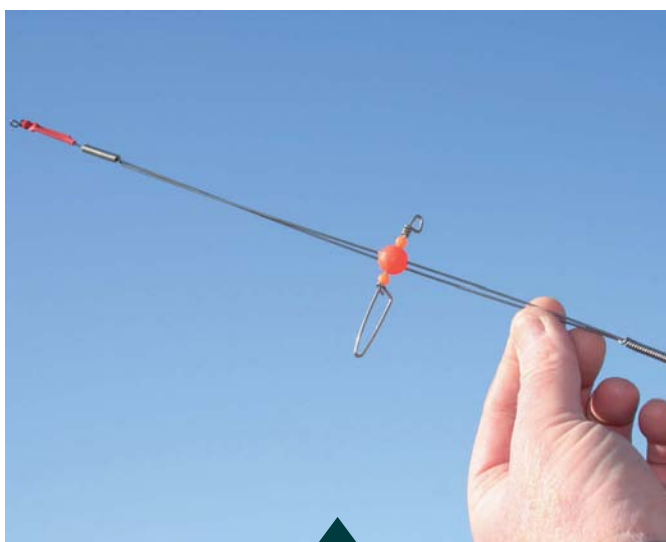


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CLACTON: REBOOTED

With the construction of new sea defences at Clacton, has the fishing been affected? **John Popplewell** investigates...

This year's spring run of codling is probably one of the best that we have had in decades. This is in stark contrast to last year, which wasn't particularly good for breeding. But, for some reason, the bigger codling have appeared on the Essex coast now with a vengeance.

It was a very slow start after Christmas. The sprat and herring shoals had arrived and were causing big problems for anglers. The cod had risen up from the bottom to feed on the sprats, and for a few weeks it was hard to get a bite, as they were completely preoccupied. However, as if by magic and almost overnight, we were hit by shoals and shoals of those plump codling.

I was interested to discover how much the fishing has been affected, if at all, by all the extensive work on the sea defences at Clacton. This work includes the building

new structures, dredging, and blasting sand up the beaches.

REVAMPED BEACHES

Clacton-on-Sea boasts a three-mile stretch of promenade, which includes the Holland Haven beaches. The fishing access all the way along is very easy with parking facilities along the whole front and a quick walk to the beach.

Approximately £38m has been pumped into new sea defences, with all the Victorian breakwaters being removed and replaced with short fishtail groynes made of giant granite rocks imported from Norway. The beaches are being replenished with thousands of tonnes of sand.

The Holland end to the north of Clacton is already finished and, by all accounts, is proving a great hit with anglers as they can now fish from the

beach on the high water mark and not have to keep moving up and down the beach when chasing the tide in and out. It's also producing lots of those spring codling when conditions are right.

DISTANCE PAYS

The Clacton coast is slightly shallower than the neighbouring Suffolk coast, so it's not unusual for the bigger casters to catch more fish as they can reach areas of more depth. Having said that, there are still plenty of fish to be caught closer in and after dark they can be caught at any distance.

Breakout leads of 5oz and 6oz will suffice even on the bigger tides, and the 'Clacton bomber rig' is a safe bet. This is a Pennel of no more than 2/0 hooks (I use Kamasan) and a 2ft trace clipped down to the lead (or whatever other device keeps the hooks in place while casting).

The first part of the flood will always fish well and the third and fourth hour of the ebb can be a crucial time. Don't worry if you don't get a single bite for two or three hours as the fish will turn on sometime during a tide. When they do, the fishing can be hectic, so it's worth having some spare traces ready and baited to save some time.

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

I arrived just before high tide and by the time I had set up base, the tide was just starting to ebb. To be honest, the first couple of hours were a struggle, with heavy clumps of weed moving down



John fished the ebb tide at his first mark

BAIT AND TIDE



The codling here are not particularly fussy eaters. Most of the codling I catch fall to simple squid baits, although I make sure these look tempting, and are streamlined on the rig for those few extra yards on casting. It's always worth spending a bit of time baiting up and getting it right, as you will catch more fish that way.



Welsh and Dungie blacks have come more into the fore on this part of the coast. Blow lug will always be top bait, but the black lugs are tougher on the hook and will keep better. And any leftovers from your trip can easily be frozen and brought out again for the next trip.

with the tide and catching on the lines, but as the tide eased I had the first of my several codling – a fish of around 2lb.

Bites came thick and fast around mid-tide, with codling falling to either squid or black lug baits, so clearly the fish were feeding on the broken ground. But as soon as the bites had started it was over – that's why it's important to have a couple of traces baited and ready to go. The fishing windows can be narrow, sometimes just 30 minutes in a tide, and if you don't have traces ready you will lose valuable fishing time.

In this instance, the fish fed for about an hour or more – it only seemed like a few minutes, but time goes so quickly when codling have their heads down and are in feeding mode. As I was casting uptide, all the bites had been pull-downs that resulted in a slack line as the fish ran down with the tide. I find this the most exciting way of fishing and the adrenaline really starts to rush as you frantically wind in the slack line to feel the healthy thump of a plump codling at the other end.

But the pull-downs had eased and all was quiet, so I called my friend, Joe McDonald, who I knew was fishing the new Holland Haven sea defence beaches some two miles away. Joe had recently moved down to the Essex coast from South Shields and was well known for running the Shields Open, and in recent years has been part co-ordinator in Icelandic Fishing Adventures.

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I'd had my quota of fish for the day so, with nothing to lose, I decided to up sticks and head down to Joe to fish the rest of the ebb tide and see if the fish were also back at the new works.

HOLLAND HAVEN

Hastily I put all my gear in the car and made the short journey to the Haven, only to be greeted by a multitude of anglers also trying their hand at the newly formed beaches.

The wind had dropped and the sea was like glass by the time I reached Joe, but I was hopeful of one more fish before dark.

Chatting with the other anglers revealed that the new beaches hadn't fished well on this tide, but I'm not one for giving up too easily. Joe had struggled with not much showing, but nevertheless we fished the last of the tide together. We did manage a couple of bites, but perhaps the disruption was still so fresh here that the fish had left the area for now? It certainly seemed that way. But all in all, the early part of the tide on the Clacton beaches had fished well for me, so I wasn't too unhappy at not catching from the last of the tide. By the next time I fish here all may well have settled.

SOUND ADVICE

If you fancy fishing the newly made beaches at Holland Haven I would advise that you upgrade your line and maybe use lead lifts, because a cast of 100 metres or more will find your tackle in rough ground and I struggled at times to shift the leads out of the bottom.

The Clacton and Holland beaches will always fish better after dark, but get the conditions right, with overcast skies and a chop on the sea, and they can fish equally well during daylight hours.

The summer fishing can produce thornback ray and bass the rocky sea defence will see good sized mullet being caught on the float, along with flounders, eels and school bass. ➤



*Casting further out
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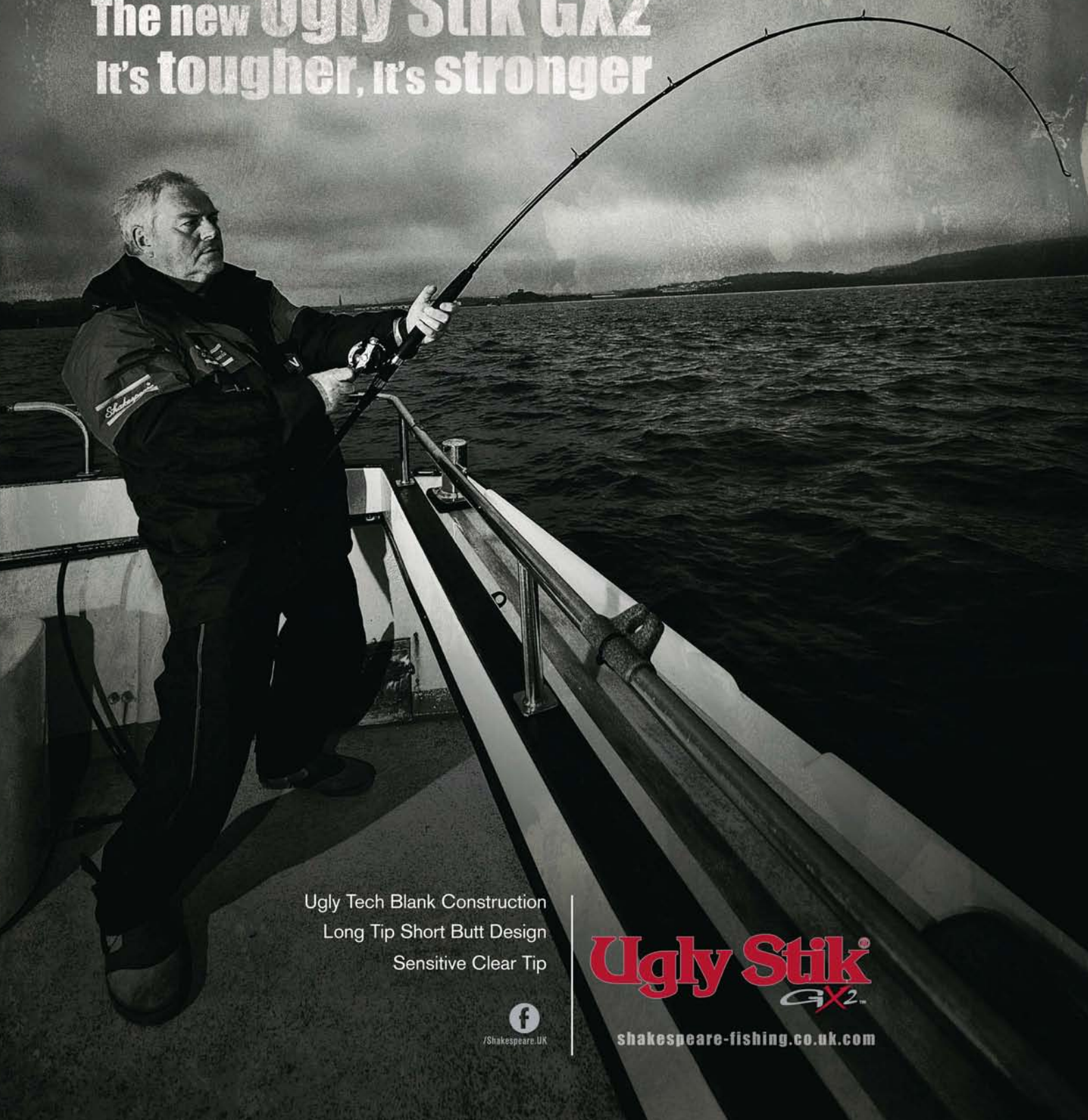
*The codling had not
abandoned Clacton*



*Joe struggled to find
fish at Holland Haven*

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FINDING THE [S]POT OF GOLD

Mike Thrussell hunts down the elusive golden grey mullet

The golden grey mullet is a fascinating fish. Something of an enigma too, displaying contradictory behaviour from one day to the next. The golden grey looks set to become the latest fad, heading towards cult status with more and more anglers targeting them and chasing specimen sized fish every year.

I admit to more than a casual affair with golden greys myself, though this infatuation has only manifested itself over the past few years. My fishing is usually in South Wales at Llangennith, though I have a sneaking suspicion they are also resident on some mid- and north Wales beaches too, just not fished for.

Golden grey mullet are a pretty fish, too. Turn their flanks and you'll see many different colours reflect off their scales, with the tell-tale golden spot on the gill cover.

My most recent foray after golden greys was in the Roscarberry area of southern Ireland, which saw my fishing buddy Mike Hennessy and myself employing a different technique to what is usual.

TACKLE TALK

Most anglers fish a small round bullet weight sliding freely on the line, stopped by a bead and swivel, then have a short hook link no more than 20in long off the swivel. This works very well if the

fish are feeding right down on the sand. However, if you spend time and watch golden greys working the surf, you will realise they swim in small tight shoals, more often than not in the mid- to surface water, often grazing the surface to create agitated water.

Golden greys also like a bait that is moving; static baits can often be ignored. Our intention was to use Bombarda-type carp controller floats, which offer several advantages. These floats are loaded, so they have the weight to cast to distance, as well as an aerodynamic shape with a long tail that acts like a dart flight. This long tail helps minimise wobble when the float is flying through the air, which, in



A size 12 Kamasan is ample for mullet

turn, helps preserve the more fragile baits golden greys take. Also, without wobble, the float will fly further. Obviously they float too, so with buoyancy they tend to move more naturally in the water giving the bait a more lifelike action, plus can be used to suspend the bait up in the water, if needs be.

Some carp controller floats are a solid green or blue colour, but I chose the clear type with a view to avoiding spooking the fish when working the float.

I chose to rig up with an 11ft medium fast taper rod that will, at a pinch, cast a little over 2oz. I use it mostly for thick-lipped mullet. The supple tip takes the sting out of lunging fish, but it has some backbone in the middle section and butt to both give casting performance, and also control a bigger fish when necessary. I matched this to a Penn Sargus 4000 fixed spool reel loaded with 20lb braid line. To the end of the braid I added 8ft of 20lb fluorocarbon.

Setting up the Bombarda float was dead simple. I slid the 25g controller float on to the fluorocarbon, slid on a 6mm soft rubber bead, tied a size 6 swivel to the fluorocarbon, then added 6ft of 6lb fluorocarbon as a hook trace to the swivel.

Onto the hook trace you then slide a small 4mm pearl or pearl blue bead, then a small silvery plastic spinner spoon blade, then one or more pearl beads. These simulate a small fish tugging at the bait and triggers the predatory instinct in the golden grey mullet. You can catch fish using just a plain bait, but the spoon and beads are way more effective.

The hook should be a size 12 Kamasan B980 Specimen Eyed pattern. Given that a big golden grey is about 2lb, this is plenty big enough.



Carp controller floats are perfect for the easily-spooked mullet



A spoon and beads will add attractive power to your bait

BAIT

There really is only one bait for golden greys, and that is harbour rag, otherwise known as 'maddies'. These are put on the hook just nicked by the head, with the rest of the body left to trail in the water to add that much needed movement. Three to four worms is usually enough. However, if the fish are playing difficult (as they often do), try using smaller baits or drop down to a smaller sized hook and use just one smaller maddie. Sometimes this simple switch can make a difference.

Other baits that can work occasionally are small white rag, bits of bread flake, and small very thin strips of mackerel or sandeel. Cut these as neatly as possible using a Stanley knife and bait board to get the edges really neat. Cut the strips from the white belly. They need to be not much more than an eighth of an inch in width, and about an inch or so in length. Again, just nick the strip once at one end.

TIDE AND WEATHER

The actual tide size seems unimportant to golden greys working the surf. They can be taken on all sizes of tide, though building tides are more consistent than dropping tides. They tend to start to work the surf best about an hour or two up the flood as the surf tables increase a little. The tables should be only small tables, not true surf, and some width to the tables between the surf is even better.

The conditions, however, are very important. Greys prefer fairly settled seas, light winds from the sea, clear water that is warm, and though they take in bright sunshine, catches are better if there is a



Maddies are the top bait for golden grey mullet



The golden grey has a distinctive yellow marking on the gill covers

FISH FACTS: GOLDEN GREY MULLET

Latin name: *Liza aurata*

UK boat record: 2lb 15oz 4dr, N Coulson, Brixham Harbour, Devon, 2013

UK shore record: 3lb 8oz 8dr, D Woolcombe, Christchurch Harbour, Dorset, 2005

Conservation status: Least concern

Appearance: The golden grey mullet has an elongated, cylindrical body. It has a dark grey back and silver-white belly, with horizontal stripes. A yellow spot marks the gill covers.

Habitat: This fish is most commonly found between 1m and 10m of water. It prefers sandy ground scattered with vegetation and smaller rocks, which provide food and shelter.



light cloud cover. Their liking for warm, shallow water, mostly over clean sand, is why they are usually only taken from mid-June through to very early September.

ESTUARY FISHING

We chose a small estuary where the narrow main channel meets a sand bar on a small beach. We instantly saw the golden greys working through the surf tables just a few yards out, at times in only inches of water. You can see their flanks flash as they turn, but also see them swirl or the surface, or see, as we said earlier, agitated water when their fins just break the surface as they swim along.

We were wearing chest waders to get right into mid-channel, but also to reduce the distance between us and the greys. It is important not to move about too much as this can push the shoal out of range.

The method is to cast over and beyond the shoal of mullet, anticipating their path, then slowly retrieve the spoon and bait towards and through the shoal. Do not try to cast into the shoal as the mullet will simply scatter and disperse. The fish are not too frightened of the float as it passes overhead, but I prefer to use clear floats to limit the visual impact in the water.



A good pair of polarised sunglasses helps enormously when looking for mullet.
With them, you can see faint surface sign and flashes of fish turning in the tables.



Mike Hennessey fished the sand bar, casting into the tables



Mike Hennessey was thrilled with his Irish specimen

Sometimes the golden grey mullet just pluck at the bait and leave it. If they do this, it is a sure sign to either slow the retrieve down, or pick it up a bit. When you get it right, you usually get a few plucks – keep retrieving, do not stop – and they will then hook themselves. Vary the retrieve speed until you get it right. This is simply trial and error on the day.

The fish usually stay in the surf tables, but if you're fishing as we were inside a small sand bar, they will also move into the calmer water either side of a

session up with two cracking fish that weighed in at 1lb 12oz apiece, Irish specimens.

We went back for another go a couple of days later, but the conditions were less stable and only Mike got a grey, but it was a specimen of 2lb. I lost two good fish, one of which was right in front of me, seconds away from landing. It also looked to be at least close to specimen size.

Targeting golden greys can be frustrating, but also addictive. They are not the easiest fish to catch, but prove to very rewarding. If you live along the south coast west of the Isle of Wight, the Devon and Cornish beaches, also those in southwest and west Wales, then you must give them a go. For me though, the very best of the fishing is in the warm clear Atlantic waters in the southwest of Ireland. The numbers are greater, and with a far better chance of a specimen fish. ➤

FISHING IN IRELAND

If you want to find out more about the fishing in the area, Inland Fisheries Ireland have excellent information available on their websites at www.fisheriesireland.ie and www.fishinginireland.info.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Courtmacsherry can be reached from Rosslare Ferry Port in a steady three-hour drive, and it is an easy modern road. Ferry information is available on www.stenaline.co.uk.

channel. Mike was casting into the tables, and I was casting into calmer water where I'd spotted a few moving fish.

INTO THE FISH

Mike was first in with a nice fish of about a pound, then I followed suit with one the same size, followed by a smaller fish about 10oz. We also had a few small flounder, turbot, an eel, plus a few unwanted lesser weever, but it helps illustrate that this retrieved float technique takes other species too, not just golden greys. Mike rounded the

Q & A

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The editor reserves the right to amend submissions for reasons of space, brevity, legality and sense



BITE DETECTION

How do I tell a bite from wave effect on the movement of my rod tip? Also, as darkness is a better time to fish, how do you see the rod tip movement in the dark?

David Dee Carroll, via email

MIKE THRUSSELL ANSWERS...

If you watch your rod tip it will move rhythmically to both wind and wave action. For example, as surf rolls up the line, the rod tip slowly pulls over, holds for a second, then slowly lifts back. Weed also has the effect of pulling the rod tip slowly over as wave pressure pulls on the weed. Wind on the rod tip and line also tends to have a slow methodical effect much like a shudder on rod tip movement.

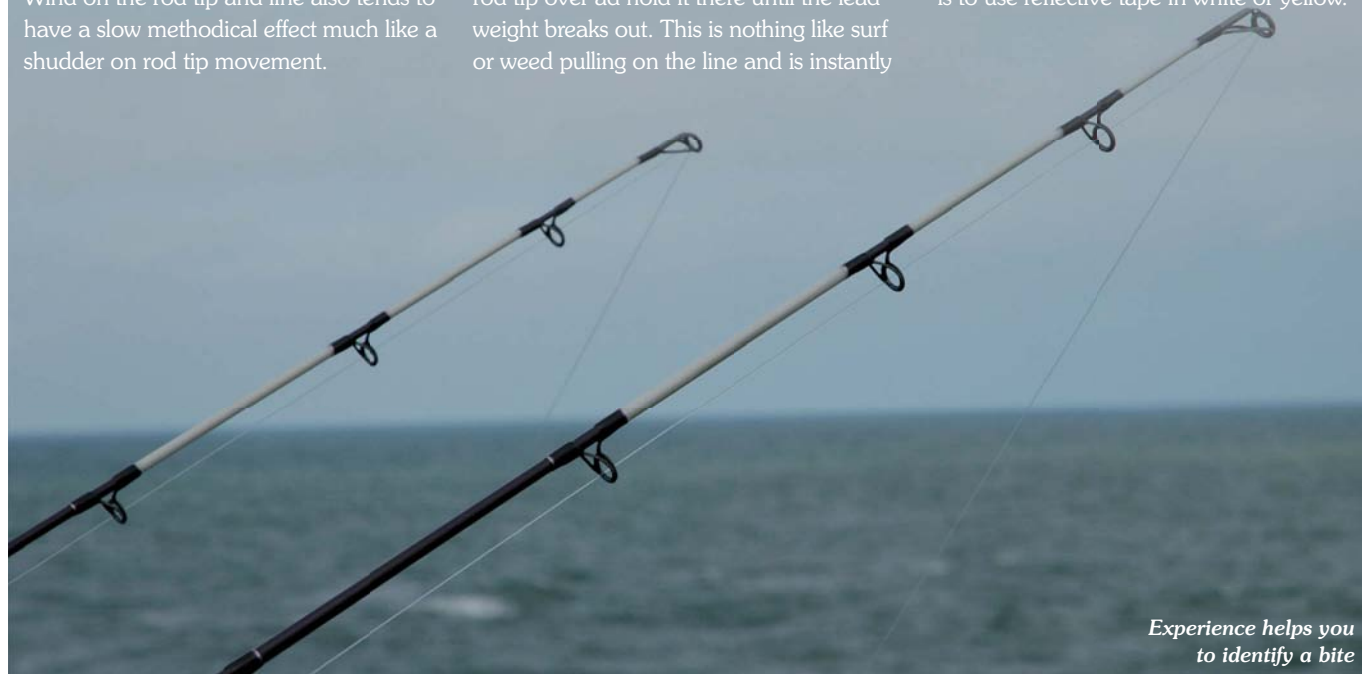
When a fish takes a bait, the rod will be much more animated. A small flatfish will repeatedly knock on the rod tip in a series of short fast rattles. This is the fish pulling at the bait and on the hook as it gets hooked and tries to swim away. It is much faster than any effect wind, tide or weed can give. A bigger fish, such as a bass or cod, often just shovels the bait into its mouth as it swims along, and this sees the rod tip pull quickly over in a sudden dip, shudder or rattle, then pull back straight. Again you cannot mistake this. Slow eaters, such as rays and conger, may jag on the rod tip a couple of times, but will then pull the rod tip over and hold it there until the lead weight breaks out. This is nothing like surf or weed pulling on the line and is instantly

recognisable as a bite.

Understanding what is and isn't a bite only comes with experience. You just have to be observant, and you will soon learn to tell the difference between wave, weed and wind, and a fish.

To see bites at night, many rods incorporate white paint on the last foot or so of rod tip. This works well enough if you have a good light source shining directly on the tip all the time. If your rod does not have white paint, then add a length of white PVC tape, which is fine, but not great.

The best way to highlight your rod tip is to use reflective tape in white or yellow.



Experience helps you to identify a bite

SFM'S EXPERTS



BARNEY WRIGHT

An all-round angler who favours shore fishing and is also an accomplished tournament caster



MIKE THRUSSELL

A brilliant shore and boat angler, with a huge wealth of experience and knowledge



JOHN POPPLEWELL

An excellent shore angler with a passion for stingrays and a talent for bait digging



GARETH DAVIES

An all-round accomplished angler, as well as a top tournament caster



SIMON EVERETT

A top sea angler, and one of the few fully qualified kayak instructors in the UK



THE WORM'S HEAD

I have heard that it's not necessary to use all of a ragworm when hooking it up for bait, that just the head is best. Is this true?

James Jones, Gorleston

BARNEY WRIGHT ANSWERS...

It's true that much of the scent and attraction comes from the head end of a ragworm. But how you bait up with it depends a lot on the size of the ragworm you're using. If it's a normal 4in to 6in worm then it's best to hook the whole thing on. Your confusion might be coming from the guys who have encountered and handled what are known as 'snakes'. These are worms from 8in to 20in long.

When I have a worm 8in or more I will use it in one of two ways. First, I thread the worm head first onto my hook, and

when it's about halfway on I will break off the excess and use the other half as a second bait. The other way uses the whole worm; I will often try to get an entire worm of this size neatly onto Pennel hooks for bass or stingray, but once they're over a certain size it's impossible to do this.

What I will also advise is a little trick that was sometimes a match winner for me. When using fresh lugworm, tip off your bait with a ragworm head. For some reason the codling love this cocktail, which works in two ways. The scent from the rag head is strong and attracts fish, and it's also tough and anchors the lugworm on the hook.

One final point is that if you hook the worm head first, the lower section will wriggle about as an attractor. If doing this, a top tip is to dunk the worm in the sea before casting as this toughens it up and reduces the chances of it flying off during the cast.

BRISTOL BLONDES

I love to fish on the Welsh side of the Bristol Channel for blonde rays, but haven't been very successful. Are there a couple of marks you could recommend? And when is the best time of year for blondes?

Alan Stewart, Bristol

GARETH DAVIES ANSWERS...

We are quite well blessed with our coastline, with lots of sandy coves, broken ground and tackle graveyards. We do seem to get a good concentration of blondes off the shore from as far east as St Mary's Well Bay, which on the bigger spring tides can be fished only over low water. It is one of those special beaches that can throw up some seriously large specimens. I tackle the venue with pulley rigs, extra sharp strong hooks such as Sakuma Manta Extra or Tsunami Black Mako with blast frozen baits.

High water is a harder one as the marks can be hit and miss. I would stay with

low water and head a little further west to Monknash, which fishes better in the dark, though daylight will and does throw up lots of good fish including some stonking small-eyed ray.

These are two of the more easily accessible marks and need tackling in daylight first to get an understanding of terrain and where you need to fish to get away safely with the flooding tide.

Late autumn really does see a greater concentration of better blondes, although during the warmer summer months the fish are in chasing natural foods too.



IN THE SNOOD

When tying rigs, what should determine the length of the snoods?

J Wainwright, Powys

BARNEY WRIGHT ANSWERS...

Tide is the main effect on our snood length, as well as the distance we're fishing. The rule of thumb is that fast tide, longer snood, slow tide shorter snood. The reason being that long snood in slow tides will tangle, but short snoods will not. Long snoods fish well in fast tides re bait presentation as it wafts nice and naturally, whereas short snood tend to be a bit stiff. Long range casting is always better with short snoods as there's less wind resistance. Try to make rigs with snoods generally no longer than 20in and no shorter than 8in.



Even tiny changes can alter a fish's behaviour

FEEDING PATTERNS

I boat fish between Criccieth and Bardsey Island in North Wales. I can fish the same spot two days running in the same state of tide and in similar weather conditions enjoying great fishing one day, but poor the day after, and vice-versa. Are fish nomadic? Do they only eat when hungry, or will they eat anything that is put in front of them, hungry or not?

Tony Sulcas, via email

MIKE THRUSSELL ANSWERS...

Although the weather conditions may seem similar to you, subtle differences can be one explanation.

A slight shift in wind direction one day to the next can put fish either on or off the feed. Increased cloud cover reduces light levels entering the water and this also can increase the likelihood of fish hunting and feeding.

The tides are never the same two days running. We barely notice slight changes in height, flow and speed, but to fish it can be the difference between a patch of ground producing food that is washed out, or being barren because there is not enough tide flow to flush it out.

Many fish, such as whiting, huss, cod, bass, rays and tope, are constantly moving to new ground. This can be because a group of fish on one patch of ground can quickly strip it of all available food. They have to move on to where food is more available, and consequently it takes time for the original mark to rebuild its resource. Predators also move through in groups and fish such as whiting, dabs and other small species will scatter wide and far to avoid being eaten, again leaving patches of ground empty for a short time.

Fish do not feed like us. They will feed heavily when food is easily available, then only pick at food until their stomachs are empty again. Fish such as conger feed heavily for a couple of tides, then often disappear for the next few days.

If you have enjoyed good fishing one day on a specific mark, then try it a second day, but generally good skippers and good anglers would normally look for a change of ground day to day. Try a different wreck, or go to a different part of a reef instead of relying on the same ground each and every day.

MACK ATTACK

What is the best time to target mackerel on the East Anglia coast? I never have any joy, and I heard Weybourne was good but no success there either. So when is the best time of year, and where is the best spot?

Steve Setchell, Hopton

JOHN POPPLEWELL ANSWERS...

Mackerel can hit the East Anglian coastline at any time, from April right through to October. There is really no set place that they will arrive first, but you can up with up with reports on the Internet.

Having said that, there are certain areas that will hold more mackerel than others. Winterbourne is one of those places. The best time to try here is either early morning or the last couple of hours before dark. Weather conditions will also play a part; a settled spell and an off-shore breeze will clear the sea, encouraging mackerel to feed.

Unfortunately on the East Anglian coast we do usually have murky water. The seabed is mainly made up of sand and mud, so any strong winds will stir the bottom up. Mackerel tend to feed by sight, so murky water is something you want to avoid when fishing for them.

When the mackerel shoals are in and feeding they can be caught by using a set of mackerel feathers, or on a light spinning outfit.

FLOOD AND EBB

When arriving at a venue, how can I tell if the water is flooding or ebbing?

Michael Williams, Dorset

BARNEY WRIGHT ANSWERS...

The easiest way is to use a tide timetable for the area, or have a peek on the internet for the tides in the area before you go. However, you can often find yourself at a venue with no information. In this case, look to see if the sand is damp ahead of the water line. If so, the tide is ebbing. If the sand is dry, it's coming in. On rock marks, the same principle applies. If the terrain is generally damp, the tide is ebbing. If dry, it's coming in. Failing that, just pay attention as you set up; the tide will have moved enough in 30 minutes or so to have given the game away.

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FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

The hard work of the Angling Trust is finally paying off in Europe, says **David Mitchell**

It's not just politicians in Westminster that we are good at influencing (believe me, we are). The Angling Trust has also helped to set up a new Forum for Recreational Fisheries and the Aquatic Environment in the European Parliament. This means that we now have a group of angling friendly MEPs in Brussels who are prepared to fight for our rights as fisher folk, and make sure anglers from around Europe are heard when decisions are made that affect your right to fish and the freedoms that come with it.

The first Forum event was held at the European Parliament building on 25 March, where MEPs had the chance to quiz members of the European Anglers Alliance (EAA) and the European Fishing Tackle Trade Association (EFTTA) who provide the secretariat for the forum.

Both Mike Heylin OBE, board member of EAA and former chairman of the Angling Trust, and Mark Owen, the AT's head of Freshwater, gave presentations to MEPs and their assistants from right across the EU.

Mike said, "Twenty-five million people regularly fish across the EU, the biggest EU constituency. They must be better taken into consideration by their EU representatives".

I couldn't agree more.

A second event about bass is taking place in April, where yours truly will be present to make sure that the huge value and importance of bass angling in the UK is taken on board by your elected representatives in Europe.

This is particularly important given that MEPs voted last month to adopt a resolution on the Sustainable Exploitation of Sea Bass, which was encouraging if a bit light on the fact that recreational angling is far and away the single most valuable part of Europe's bass fishery.

There's clearly a lot of educating to do to make sure MEPs are aware of the facts about how important angling is to millions of fishy voters right across the European Union. The establishment of the new forum is now making sure this happens and that commercial fishing is not seen as the owner and sole user of our publically-owned fish stocks.

Not only was the forum launched in March, but the Angling Trust also issued its manifesto for angling ahead of the general election, which we are calling on all major UK political parties to sign up to and support.

Many anglers despise the involvement of politics in angling and

I get that, I really do. The solution is simply to support the Angling Trust and let us take care of it for you through our ever-increasing influence over decision makers from Bridlington to Brussels. ➤



The Angling Trust represents game, coarse and sea anglers in England. It campaigns for a better deal for anglers, taking on important issues such as conservation, overfishing and environment.

The Angling Trust is also active in the promotion and growth of fishing, and fights for anglers' rights at a national level. Visit www.anglingtrust.net for more information or to join up. ➤

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BERRY GOOD!

SFM reader **Gareth Hopkins** spills the beans on top Torbay mark, Berry Head

My girlfriend Emily and I had been waiting for the holiday season to end in the English Riviera so we could once again get out and fish our favourite local Torbay mark, Berry Head, in the town of Brixham. It is almost impossible to fish in the summer, because it's a very good mackerel mark and is often very busy. So, with the right time of year upon us, it was time to plan a session.

We decided to fish the Monday night and then a day session on the Tuesday, as it was a good tide with high water at 9.30pm.

Cod were the target for the night session, with wrasse and other species in the daytime, but just about anything can turn up here.

We finished work and went off to Tidal Tackle in Torquay to pick up our bait for the night.

GARETH'S GUIDE TO BERRY HEAD

Berry Head is a nature reserve in Torbay. It is fairly easy to get to and if you have a disabled badge you can drive right down to the quarry. If not, there is a car park a short distance away.

The mark can be split roughly into four different areas. The first you come to is '**the platform**'. The ground is rough close in, but a cast of over 50 metres will put you onto sand. Species are plentiful, with a lot of mini species, gurnard, rockling, conger and wrasse on offer. The platform is probably the most popular spot and in the summer attracts a lot of holidaymakers spinning for the mackerel.

Then there is **the high ground**. This starts from the quarry house and extends all the way along the wall. Here, you need a cast of 100m plus and the tide is very strong, so grip leads are essential. There's a big drop from the wall to the sea, so a drop net

would be advisable. Fish here for the winter codling, using peeler and lug baits over high water for the best results.

Next to the high ground, there's an area of **sheltered rock**. Here, you can cast out to deeper water, but it can become very snaggy, so expect to lose tackle. This area is good for conger and bull huss, and can also be productive spinning for pollack at dusk.

Last but by no means least is the famous '**Hairy Ledge**'. This area is down a drop of about 35ft and to get to it, a rope is essential. Once down, there's enough room for about three people to fish and you will be casting into about 100ft depth of water. Needless to say the tide is very strong here, but this area produces the best fish with double figure cod most winters. This is a dangerous place and I would not fish here at night without a local who knows the area better.

THE NIGHT SESSION

We arrived at our location at about 6.30pm and we happened to be the only ones there. We decided to fish the platform, and cod was the target. Emily set her rod up and decided to fish a two-hook flapper rig with ragworm and fresh mackerel as bait.

When fishing at Berry Head for cod, I use a Century Kompressor SS with a Daiwa Sloss reel with 25lb line. Even though you're casting onto sand 50m out, I find that distance casting definitely finds the cod. Also, if you do hook a good fish, you then have to get it over the graveyard of tackle and the snaggy rocks in front of you. For the cod I use a pulley rig with a size 4/0 hook, as I find that a Pennel style increases the chance of snagging.

Unlike Emily, I decided to use peeler crab bait for the cod. I cast about 150 yards and then game on. A couple of hours went by and I had missed one bite, but that was all.

High water was fast approaching and the anticipation of what may come in with the tide started to kick in and kept me concentrating on the tip of my rod.

INTERESTINGLY...

The British record mackerel was caught at Berry Head in 1982, weighing in at a massive 5lb 11oz



Gareth was pleased to catch his target fish, a codling



Berry Head is a great fishing spot as well as a nature reserve and heritage site

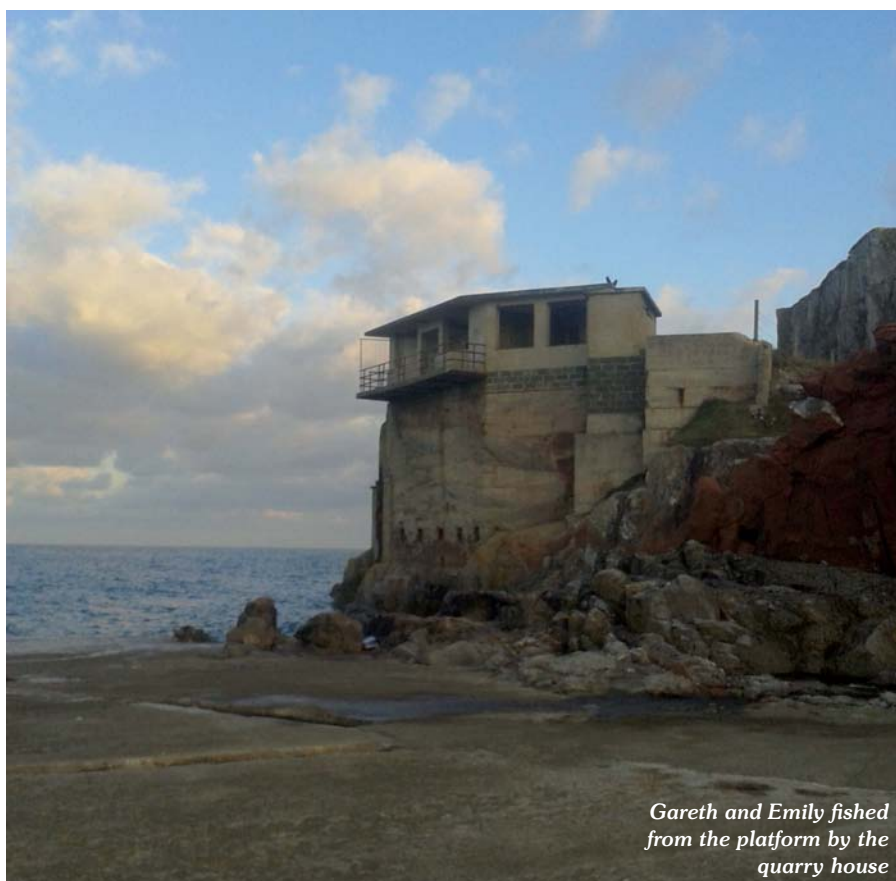
Image (c) Gavin Mackintosh

INTO THE FISH

Emily was catching lots of whiting up to about a pound, and some small pouting. It's good sport and there are plenty out there to keep you interested. I was thinking of changing tactics myself, then I looked at my rod and all I saw was slack line. I wound down and struck, hoping I hadn't missed the bite. Soon a small codling broke the surface. It was only about 2lb but a very welcome sight and the target species I was after.

We carried on for a couple more hours with nothing more but small whiting and pouting, then all of a sudden Emily's rod tip was banging. She struck in to the bite and the fish headed straight for the underside of the platform. After a brief scrap the culprit revealed itself – a nice three-bearded rockling of about a pound.

We continued to fish but it had gone very quiet so we decided to get a few hours sleep in the shelter and get ready for our day session.



Gareth and Emily fished from the platform by the quarry house



A lovely cuckoo wrasse was a surprise catch for Gareth

THE NEXT MORNING

We woke up at around 7.30am as high tide was at 10am, and armed with peeler crab we continued our mission for the cod. There was a strong offshore breeze and the water was murky, so perfect conditions.

After about 20 minutes my rod tip bounced and the line went slack. I wound down and struck into some weight. It was the first codling of the day, weighing about 3lb, so straight away I got to it and sent out another rig of fresh peeler. Within five minutes or so, there was another bite and another lovely codling, a bit smaller but at least they were biting. Emily had caught a few nice ballan wrasse up to 3lb; she had switched to a LRF outfit and was having some great sport.

As the morning went on and the bites decreased I decided to switch my tactics to something a bit lighter. Within the first couple of casts I knew I had made the right move, as I had a lovely cuckoo wrasse. I have never caught one of these before, but what a beautiful species it is. I didn't weigh the wrasse as I wanted to get it back as soon as possible, but I reckon it was about 1lb, a very good specimen.

Fresh mackerel was the next bait and before I knew it another bite, this time a small gurnard. The species count was mounting up. After an hour it was low water and the bites faded out, so I cut some fresh mackerel and whacked it out a bit further.

Emily was starting to show me up, as she was catching lots of wrasse – almost one every cast! Each fish was averaging about 2lb. Her trick was to fish in close with ragworm or peeler legs: the wrasse love it.

CATCH OF THE DAY

All of a sudden my line went slack, so I wound down and struck. I felt a lot of weight – it didn't feel like a cod from the way the rod tip was thumping.

There were three other anglers fishing next to me, and the fish was pulling me straight in front of where they were fishing. They all wound their lines in and were very understanding and helpful.

Almost regretting that I had switched rods and rigs, I knew that the chances of getting this fish in were slim. It's typical and just shows that in fishing you never truly know what's going to happen. I guess that's what keeps us all going – at least, it definitely keeps me going!

After a good ten minutes I had the better of the fish, as I could feel it tiring. It broke the surface and to my surprise it was a conger, and a good one at that. As soon as it came to the surface I lifted the rod and gave it to Emily, then I lifted the fish onto the platform.

It was hooked in the lip, which was lucky, because I'm sure it would have bit through 20lb line.

We weighed the conger, which came in at 21lb, then it was returned and swam off unharmed. It was as nice to see it swim off as it was to catch it.

We continued to fish but nothing was going to top that.

All in all we caught six different species and a few exceptional fish. It had been a varied, busy, very productive trip, and whether you're a beginner or a more experienced angler, Berry Head offers something for everyone. ➡



A pretty little gurnard was a welcome addition to the species total



A 21lb conger was the catch of the day at Berry Head



BEAT THE BLANK

Don't get frustrated by lack of bites – change your tactics instead, says England international angler **Rachael Jarman**

How do you feel if you go out fishing and fail to catch? I hate it! While some specimen hunters will happily fish through multiple blank sessions in search of a specific target fish, there's nothing that annoys me as much as a fishless trip. And I suspect I am not alone in feeling these frustrations.

While there is no approach that can guarantee success 100 per cent of the time, there are a few tactics to try once you get to that stage in a session where any fish would be welcome.

PULLEY POWER

When I set off to go fishing, I usually have a box of rigs ready, each selected to suit the venue and target species. For every trip, match or pleasure, I have a plan. However, an equally important part of my fishing armoury is the small selection of what I call 'backup rigs' – there's usually five or six of them.

Everywhere I go, I carry at least one pulley rig. You can catch more species on this rig than most people realise,

and because the snoods are not fixed in position, you can change the length or the hook size in seconds. For example, I may have started out with a 3/0 hook in search of cod, but when bites are scarce, a quick change to a size 4 can find me a couple of pout or whiting. Similarly, when fishing long and light rigs for flounder and mullet, if those species are not playing ball, trying the back-up pulley rig further out has caught me dogfish and small hounds.

The remaining backup rigs follow the principles of 'longer', 'lighter' or 'smaller'. Longer rigs can create more movement through the snoods and baits, especially when fished on lighter traces. This can help you to entice a fish, especially when fished in close. A lot of anglers will spend a whole session casting as far as they can, but if you are aiming not to blank, don't forget to fish in the edge. School bass, rockling, green eels, small mullet and flatfish can all be found in the first 30 yards of water on many beaches. Fishing two rods will allow you to try both approaches in one session.

Remember to match your rigs to your venues, though. When fishing one of the boulder-strewn low water marks of the Bristol Channel, 15lb Amnesia and a 6ft rig is as light as I will go. This still offers a different presentation to 4/0 hooks and a 50lb trace trying for the rays, and has caught me rockling, whiting and pout over low water when the sand and mud are reached with a gentle lob.

HOW SMALL IS TOO SMALL?

This is very much a matter of opinion, but I will go as small as a size 10 Wormer or Kamasan B541 if the fishing is very hard and I am targeting small green eels. Both super sharp, they will help you hook the tiniest of critters – not everyone's idea of fun, but it can be a blank saver, especially if you find yourself missing lots of bites. Carry a few spares with you though, as they become blunt quite quickly and you may not be able to successfully unhook every single fish. A small coarse fishing disgorging will help with this.

Try these tips and hopefully you will enjoy some frustration-free fishing! 🐟

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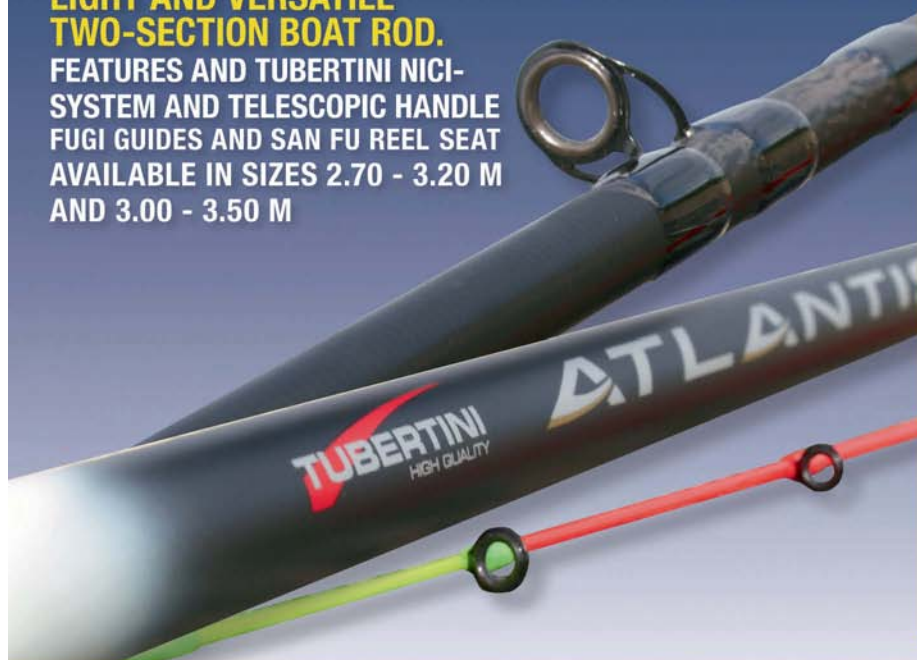
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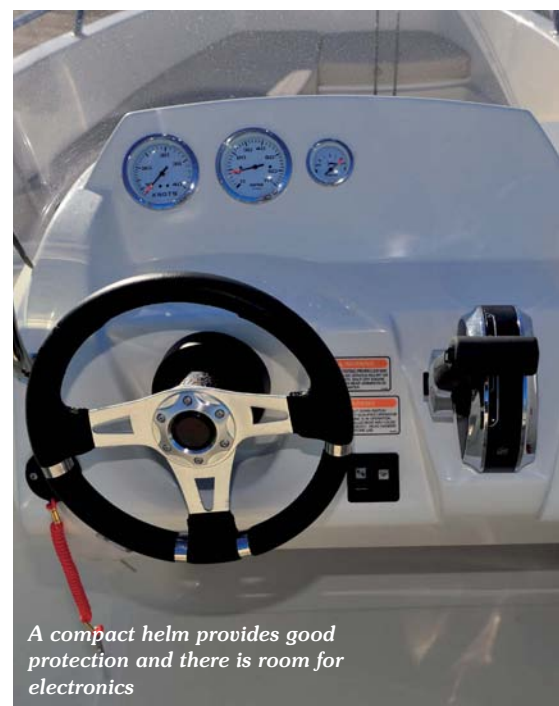
AN ACTIV LIFESTYLE

Simon Everett gets his hands on the sporty Quicksilver 455 Activ

We can all remember our first boat – the adventures it took us on, the fish we caught, the picnics we had, and the sights we saw. Best of all though are the memories of our first solo adventures or family days etched on our brains. Other boats come and go, but there is only ever one first boat. The Quicksilver 455 Activ is a far cry from the Praam dinghy, Avon Redstart, SportYak or Cadet that so many of us cut our teeth on. Even if the 455 Activ isn't your first boat, there are some nice features to be found which make her suitable for so many things.

ACTIV FAMILY

The Activ range from Quicksilver is aimed at the... well, active, water user. These boats are at the sportier end of



A compact helm provides good protection and there is room for electronics



The helm is well protected with good handrail around the perimeter of the screen

the spectrum with a smart helm layout and optional stereo system. There is even a mobile device charging socket in the dash tray. The larger boats in the range won awards right from the moment people clapped eyes on them. The 645 was crowned Motorboat of the Year by a panel of experts in 2012, so that will give you an idea of how much boat you are getting for your outlay. The 455 Activ is a good bit smaller than her award-winning sister, but she comes from the same pedigree and has similar characteristics.

FULL BODIED

The boat seems quite blocky in shape; this is because the design team chose to provide the maximum amount of internal space they could within the confines of the length. To do that, they extended the beam forwards to create an unusually spacious cockpit for such a small boat. Having provided the space to carry all friends and relations, safety had to be considered, so the freeboard is generous, for the entire length.

Recognising the limitation of the length, little is wasted at the stern, too. There is the merest hint of a step either side of the engine, just big enough to place a foot upon to haul yourself out of the water or, in the case of youngsters, stand on to dive from. The step is smaller than those on other boats, but it is there and is complete with a ladder to make the exit from the water even easier. At the bow there is a well-defined step between the pulpit rails for landing.



The 455 Activ has a very sporty build



It is not the usual style for a fishing boat, but two people can certainly fish from her

SMART SOLUTIONS

Within the extremities, there lie a variety of combinations on offer. The helm console is an integral part of the deck moulding and so determines the helm on the starboard side right above the planing point. The aft bench, with its three distinct seating places, runs right across the 6ft beam, providing plenty of space for three adults. There is no room for a table though, the boat simply isn't big enough. If you need, or want, a table, you have to look at bigger boats. What you do get is an interior with an elegant S-shaped walkway snaking through the boat that provides a classy interest for

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications:

LOA:	4.54m
Beam:	1.85m
Height:	1.61m
Weight:	401kg
Fuel capacity:	25l
CE Cat:	C
Max persons:	5
Max power:	60hp
Engine options:	40hp, 50hp or 60hp

Performance figures:

RPM	Speed (knots)
800	1.3
1,000	2.4
2,000	5.0
3,000	6.7
3,500	10.7
4,000	18.8
5,000	25.5
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Locker space is generous



the eye as well as a practical walkway through the boat.

The entire forward part of the cockpit can be filled and cushioned to create a full sun-lounging area. It just takes two drop-in cushioned bases. For convenience these infills stow neatly in dedicated racks, with lashing straps provided, under the seats either side forward of the helm. This solves the problem of where to keep the loose seat cushions when not in use, and the locker space is still sufficient to provide somewhere for your own gear and picnic – along with the fuel tank, battery and mast light.

TOP SPEEDS

For a small boat the 455 Activ offers a decent performance from modest horsepower. We had one that was fitted with Mariner's new version of their 60hp outboard and it didn't look out of place either. Not only did it suit the boat in terms of aesthetics, it also gave her a top speed of 33 knots, so she is no slouch when pressed. The hull is refined enough to use all of that power too, able to carve neat turns under control at full speed. Pressing too hard in a turn causes the propeller to lose its grip and cavitation results, but this not a failing in real terms. They had to be really tight, hard pressed turns that would be far beyond what you would do in normal boating for it to manifest itself.

THE VERDICT

As a family boat that you can take anywhere on the back of the car, the 455 Activ has a lot going for it: the safety levels provided by the secure cockpit and high freeboard, the extra space created by extending the beam so far forward, and the styling, which while modern has a retro air about it, harking back to the aft cockpit sporting boats of the 1950s and 1960s. There is even the option of a folding canopy to cover the helm and aft seats for winter use. The competitive price tag tops off the package nicely. All in all, the Quicksilver 455 Activ offers a great package for anyone who doesn't want a bigger, more cumbersome boat, and used intelligently it will provide years of enjoyment on the water. ➤

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The 455 Active can move along nicely at 33 knots



The hull is blocky but nimble

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Variable winds saw a court change and improvement in distances after midday. Dave Mewburn and Robbie Taylor cast their distances in the morning before later going fishing. Danny Stone had the furthest cast, beating Olivier Folcke by just 10cm. Mark Ward set a new record on the 50g using a multiplier, and Ian McHaffie achieved a PB using the same. Martyn Smith broke the 200m barrier for the first time, also achieving a PB.

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Ian McHaffie				
Paul Chapman (OTG) (FS)	178.30			
Damian Hawes (OTG)		180.00 (PB)		
Barry Clayton (OTG)		158.00 (PB)	140.00	
Caster	50G			
Mark Ward	189.60 (CR)			
Ian McHaffie	182.00 (PB)			

NESA, KIRKLETHAM SHOWGROUND, REDCAR, NORTH YORKSHIRE

8 MARCH

CONDITIONS: DRY. WIND 12-8MPH WSW.

CASTER	100G	125G	150G	175G
Distances in Metres				
Owan Moyle			262.02	240.77
Jay Lee	235.55	243.64	260.00	
Gary Bewick			249.30	



Brad Kinnair

Steve Swales	234.33	246.70	237.64	
Dave Sugden			240.81	
Jay Threlfall		239.75		240.04
Andy Byrom		230.24		
John Ward			227.44	
Syd Burtcher			231.96	
Bazz Blakeman		227.22		
Chris Woodrow		220.18	225.65	213.88
Brad Kinnair (Jnr)		220.50	215.00 (PB)	211.42 (PB)
Ian Miles		206.00		
Dave Gibson		200.55 (PB)	198.88 (PB)	188.80 (PB)
Lee Parker			200.48 (PB)	
Phil Darby	182.52	199.68		
Richy Ayres		195.15		
Ian Wiles			183.05	
Gary Howard		181.56		
Paul Randolph		178.65 (PB)	165.15	
Bill Bradley		165.60	174.51	
Tommy Harland		171.50		
Shaun Dorothy			160.82	

SUFFOLK SPORTSCAST, PURDIS FARM, IPSWICH, SUFFOLK 8 MARCH

CONDITIONS: SUNNY. WIND 6-12 WSW.

CASTERS: 24, OF WHOM 2 DID NOT MEASURE.

CASTER	100G	125G	150G	175G
Distances in Metres				
Jason Carter	248.20 (CR)	264.85	260.33	253.73
Kevin Southey		238.00	245.00	236.77
Duane Lockwood (BC)		238.36	245.00	236.00
Stephen Boyt (OTG)		226.00	233.80	222.00
Stephen Boyt			230.00	
Chris Cannell		229.55	229.90	
Darren Brooks		225.62	219.00	
Warren Jarvis		221.90	216.22	
Adam Jennings		214.78		
Martin Waters			204.00 (PB)	211.55 (PB)
Paul Dawes			211.00 (PB)	
Kim Tester	207.30	210.93		
Paul Mayhew		208.64		
Ron Archer	206.66			
Jon King			206.00	
Dave Andrews (BC)		204.12		185.00
Bob Murray (BC)	200.45	203.85	200.05	185.66
Dave Venables	176.20	191.86		
Steve Markham	189.84	190.03		
Clive Cracknell (BC)			188.00	
Dan Lockwood		172.26 (PB)		
CASTER	200G			
Martin Waters	185.00 (PB)			
JUNIORS	75G	150G		
Kieren Waters		150.00 (PB)		
Jake Mayhew	84.00			

SURFCAST WALES, PEMBREY, CARMARTHENSHIRE 8 MARCH

CONDITIONS: RAINY MORNING, DRY AFTERNOON. WIND 16-18 MPH SW-NNW-NW.

Matt Russell topped the sheets, with his coach Glyn Baldwin not far behind. Third placed Milo Bjegovic showed his versatility by recording on three leads, and also having a stab at the backcast. This event also featured the eagerly anticipated duel of the Old Rams v Young Lambs competition, with the seniors scoring a resounding victory. In the interest of fairness, the Shortman IVF method was used to calculate the handicap, and in this case, awarded the over 50s with a metre for every year past their half century. This resulted in the senior team amassing an extraordinary 171.17m winning margin.

CASTER	100G	125G	150G	175G
Distances in Metres				
Matthew Russell		243.17		
Glyn Baldwin	216.22	230.30		
Milo Bjegovic		229.86	219.90	218.76
Milo Bjegovic (BC)		165.00		
Phil Jones		229.42		
Dai Thomas		224.65		
Rob Jowett			208.25	
Kevin Shortman		201.30	201.10	
Brian Sweet		194.00		
Jerome Curtis			192.40	
Stephen Derraven			166.70	



Duane Lockwood

RAMSEY ANGLING CLUB, ISLE OF MAN 14 MARCH

CASTER	125G	150G
Distances in Yards-Feet-Inches		
Andrew Dugdale		257-2-04
Barry Sharpe	241-1-00	
Michael Rycroft		215-1-05
Kev Mac		196-2-06
Bill Harrison		180-1-03
George Dugdale		159-2-00
Roger Kermod		136-1-03
Jack Kissack	128-2-02 (PB)	
Ian Ashcroft		125-0-06

NWSA, SANDY VILLA FARM, COCKERHAM, LANCASHIRE 15 MARCH

CASTER	100G	125G	150G	175G
Distances in Yards-Feet-Inches				
Jay Lee			274-2-00	274-1-07
Alan Varley			271-1-02	
Kristian Leslie		248-0-08	253-0-10	241-2-11
John Ward			241-1-11	229-0-02
Syd Burtcher			240-1-06	226-0-08
Colin Blackburn	211-2-08	218-1-04	209-0-02	
John Walker	200-1-11	216-1-00		
Phil Derby		204-0-04		
Darren Gillies (OTG)		159-2-10	203-0-04 (PB)	174-1-02
Paul Randolph		184-2-08	171-2-11	
Stephen Derraven			166.70	

WEYMOUTH CASTING CLUB, DORCHESTER, DORSET 15 MARCH

CASTERS: 15.

CASTER	100G	125G	150G	175G
Distance in Metres				
John Hooley	234.10	251.25	244.81	230.82
Matt Russell		250.40		230.50
Phil Jones		241.50		211.96
Garry Dickerson		240.48		
Meirion Pritchard		239.00	235.00	
Jon Hook			229.42	
Martin Sadler		221.50	220.50	
Dennis Retter	197.00	208.50		190.64
Mark Carne		203.00		
Manny Lasco				193.80
P Sylvester		192.36 (PB)	191.00	
Terry Moreton	191.55	188.00	190.00	
Stephen Derraven			188.15	
M Gibbs			160.00	

SPORTSCAST IRELAND, NEWTOWNMOUNTKENNEDY, WICKLOW, IRELAND
22 MARCH
CONDITIONS: DRY AND SUNNY. WIND 5-10 MPH S-SW.

CASTER	125G	150G
Distance in Metres		
Frank Folan		217.75
Terry O'Donovan		214.29
Paddy Cunningham		213.49
Brendan Clearly	181.00	
Danny O'Reardon		172.00 (PB)
Ian Daly		170.50
DAY CASTERS	125G	150G
Mark Killey		171.55

UKSF GP1, HUNTINGDON RACECOURSE, HUNTINGDON, CAMBRIDGESHIRE
22 MARCH
CONDITIONS: DRY WITH SUNNY INTERVALS. WIND 0-2 MPH SE-SSE-E.
CASTERS: 30, WITH 2 JUNIORS AND 3 DAY CASTERS.

Congratulations to young Brad Kinnair who broke the Junior 175g record with a cast of 200.92m in difficult conditions. Jason Carter came out on top overall, in addition to his two individual weight wins (125g and 150g).

CASTER	OVERALL	100G	125G	150G	175G
Distances in Metres					
Jason Carter	254.00		247.75	254.00	238.43
Danny Moeskops	248.41		248.41	242.33	
Andy Copping	247.29	229.57	246.74	247.29	
Mick Grant	244.42			244.42	229.67
Jay Lee	243.49			243.49	232.07
Jamie Blakeman	240.72			226.04	240.72
Owan Moyle	240.17		228.25	240.17	227.17
Duane Lockwood	236.95		228.88	236.95	
Kevin Southey	231.38			231.38	225.24
John Hooley	231.20		231.20	222.73	
Steven Swales	229.38	211.55	229.38		
Matt Russell	226.97		226.97		216.86
Lee Adams	225.00			225.00	219.52
Garry Dickerson	222.52		214.04	222.52	
Ricky Nash	220.84	201.12	220.84	206.91	
Kristian Leslie	220.72	207.53	216.13	220.72	
Steve Boyt	218.82		217.62	218.82	204.81
Bazz Blakeman	217.05		217.05	205.24	203.56
Barrie Davies	204.17	193.56	204.17	197.13	
Brad Kinnair (Jnr)	200.92	196.68			200.92
Kim Tester	200.83	194.68	200.83		
Keith Carter	199.57		199.57	181.76	
Colin Blackburn	199.02	191.18	199.02		
Andy Miller	198.34	198.34	195.63	194.90	
Dennis Retter	196.68	196.68	192.93		
Paul Mayhew	194.52		194.52	192.72	
Bob Murray	189.24	182.41	189.13	189.24	
Colin Howlett	188.68	185.24	188.68		
Tony Weaver	185.18		185.18		
Stephen Derraven	NCR				
Topper Brown	NCR				
CASTER	OVERALL	75G			
Jake Mayhew (OTG)	99.00	99.00			
DAY CASTERS	OVERALL	100G	125G	150G	175G
Andy Byrom	218.39		218.39		
Darren Brooks	216.50		216.50		
Bruce Marlboro	NCR				



Gary Blanchard

UPCOMING EVENTS
PLEASE CHECK ALL DETAILS WITH THE ORGANISER PRIOR TO THE EVENT
APRIL 2015

19	NESA, Kirkleatham Showground, Redcar
19	Norfolk Casting Club, CITB, Birch Newton, Norfolk
19	Suffolk Sportscast, Purdis Farm, Ipswich, Suffolk
19	Sportscast Ireland, Newtownmountkennedy, Wicklow, Ireland
19	Weymouth CC, Dorchester, Dorset
26	Kent Sportscast, Tilmanstone, Kent
26	NWSA, Sandy Villa Farm, Cockerham, Lancashire
26	Surfcaster Wales, Pembrey, Carmarthenshire

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MAY 2015

2	East Coast Casting Club, Driffield, Yorkshire
2	Suffolk Sportscast, Purdis Farm, Ipswich, Suffolk
3	UKSF GP3, Huntingdon Racecourse, Cambridgeshire
3	Sussex Casting Club, Steyning, West Sussex
10	Kent Sportscast, Tilmanstone, Kent
10	NESA, Kirkleatham Showground, Redcar
10	Westward CC, Cardinham, Cornwall
17	East Coast Casting Club, Driffield, Yorkshire
17	Norfolk Casting Club, CITB, Birch Newton, Norfolk
17	Suffolk Sportscast, Purdis Farm, Ipswich, Suffolk
17	Weymouth CC, Dorchester, Dorset
24	NWSA, Sandy Villa Farm, Cockerham, Lancashire
24	Sportscast Ireland, Newtownmountkennedy, Wicklow, Ireland
31	Kent Sportscast, Tilmanstone, Kent
31	Norfolk Casting Club, CITB, Birch Newton, Norfolk
31	Surfcaster Wales, Pembrey, Carmarthenshire

JUNE 2015

7	Suffolk Sportscast, Purdis Farm, Ipswich, Suffolk
7	Sussex Casting Club, Steyning, West Sussex
7	NESA, Kirkleatham Showground, Redcar
7	East Coast Casting Club, Driffield, Yorkshire
14	Kent Sportscast, Tilmanstone, Kent
14	Norfolk Casting Club, CITB, Birch Newton, Norfolk
14	NWSA, Sandy Villa Farm, Cockerham, Lancashire
14	Westward CC, Cardinham, Cornwall
20-21	Suffolk Sportscast, Purdis Farm, Ipswich, Suffolk
21	NESA, Kirkleatham Showground, Redcar
21	Sportscast Ireland, Newtownmountkennedy, Wicklow, Ireland
21	Weymouth CC, Dorchester, Dorset
27	East Coast Casting Club, Driffield, Yorkshire
28	Kent Sportscast, Tilmanstone, Kent
28	Norfolk Casting Club, CITB, Birch Newton, Norfolk
28	Suffolk Sportscast, Purdis Farm, Ipswich, Suffolk
28	Surfcaster Wales, Pembrey, Carmarthenshire

JULY 2015

5	East Coast Casting Club, Driffield, Yorkshire
5	NWSA, Sandy Villa Farm, Cockerham, Lancashire
5	Sussex Casting Club, Steyning, West Sussex
11	Suffolk Sportscast, Purdis Farm, Ipswich, Suffolk
12	Kent Sportscast, Tilmanstone, Kent
12	NESA, Kirkleatham Showground, Redcar
12	Norfolk Casting Club, CITB, Birch Newton, Norfolk
12	Westward CC, Cardinham, Cornwall
19	Sportscast Ireland, Newtownmountkennedy, Wicklow, Ireland
19	Weymouth CC, Dorchester, Dorset

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TERRY CARROLL

Terry Carroll of Zziplex died peacefully at home in March after a short but fierce battle with cancer.

"Terry to me was a master at turning sheets of carbon prepreg into something that could cast a long way, win and set world records," said casting expert Andy Miller. "His ability to create something from a simple conversation – exactly as described – was just amazing. He was an encyclopedia of casting knowledge, from both a competitor's and a blank designer's perspective. The hours of conversation we had will be something that I will hold on to."

"I'm confident that the medals won and records set at the ICSF World Championships using Zziplex rods are down to his understanding of the different carbons and casting styles."

"Terry was a quiet person and was always a total gentleman who asked for very little. He was a unique individual who will be missed, and I feel privileged to have met him."

Tony Gittins of The Rocket Reel Company added: "[Terry was] a friend for the best part of 40 years – a man always at the forefront of technical developments in rod design, who will be remembered in the surfcasting world as a true legend."

Lee Isham, who has been Terry's right hand man for many years, will continue his mentor's work at Zziplex.



Terry Carroll (L) was a massive influence on tournament casting



BREAM MACHINE

Glen Milligan welcomes the return of the black bream this month

It's that time of year again, boys and girls. As spring kicks in we have the whole season there in front of us to enjoy. In many parts of the country, Easter marks the arrival of the black bream shoals, who move back inshore to enjoy the warmer temperatures. It's one of nature's incredible mysteries how these same fish return year after year to exactly the same place. Whether it's a rocky reef or a shingly bank, they resume their occupancy for the season to spawn and feed.

SPAWNING SEASON

There is an array of film available on the internet showing these spawning fish in action. As usual, it's the guy that does all the work, building a suitable nest for their pregnant female partner. When satisfied, the female will deposit her eggs and then be off on her merry way. The male fish will move in, and after fertilising the eggs he will then stand guard over them, keeping them protected as they mature and hatch. He

will certainly be busy, as there are plenty of predators that will happily enjoy a free meal if he turns his back.

It is normally these bigger spawning fish that are the first to arrive inshore. Averaging 2-3lb they are mature, meaty specimens. The two sexes are easily to identify, the males being much more colourful with bright blue markings on their foreheads. The females are much duller, without the blue. The females will also have fat bellies full of roe!



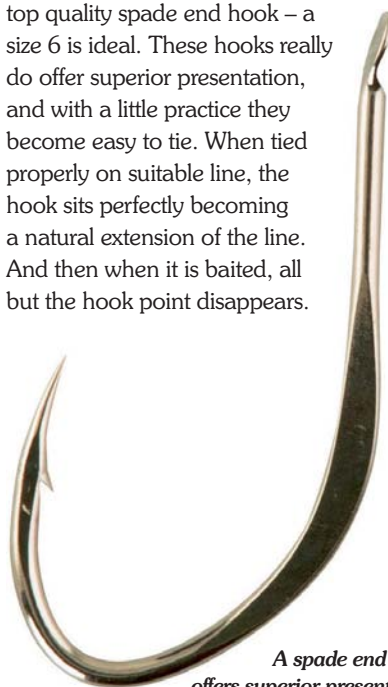
Delicate squid baits will be appealing to the finicky bream

FEEDING

Like most fish, bream will occasionally feed ravenously, eagerly attacking any kind of bait put before them regardless of size or species. On those days, little skill or finesse is required. However, bream are generally a lot more choosy, and frustrated anglers will feel the constant taps and rattles as the fish steals the bait, just leaving bare a hook. Yes, most of the time a more skilled approach will be needed to encourage the bream to take the bait properly.

HOOKS

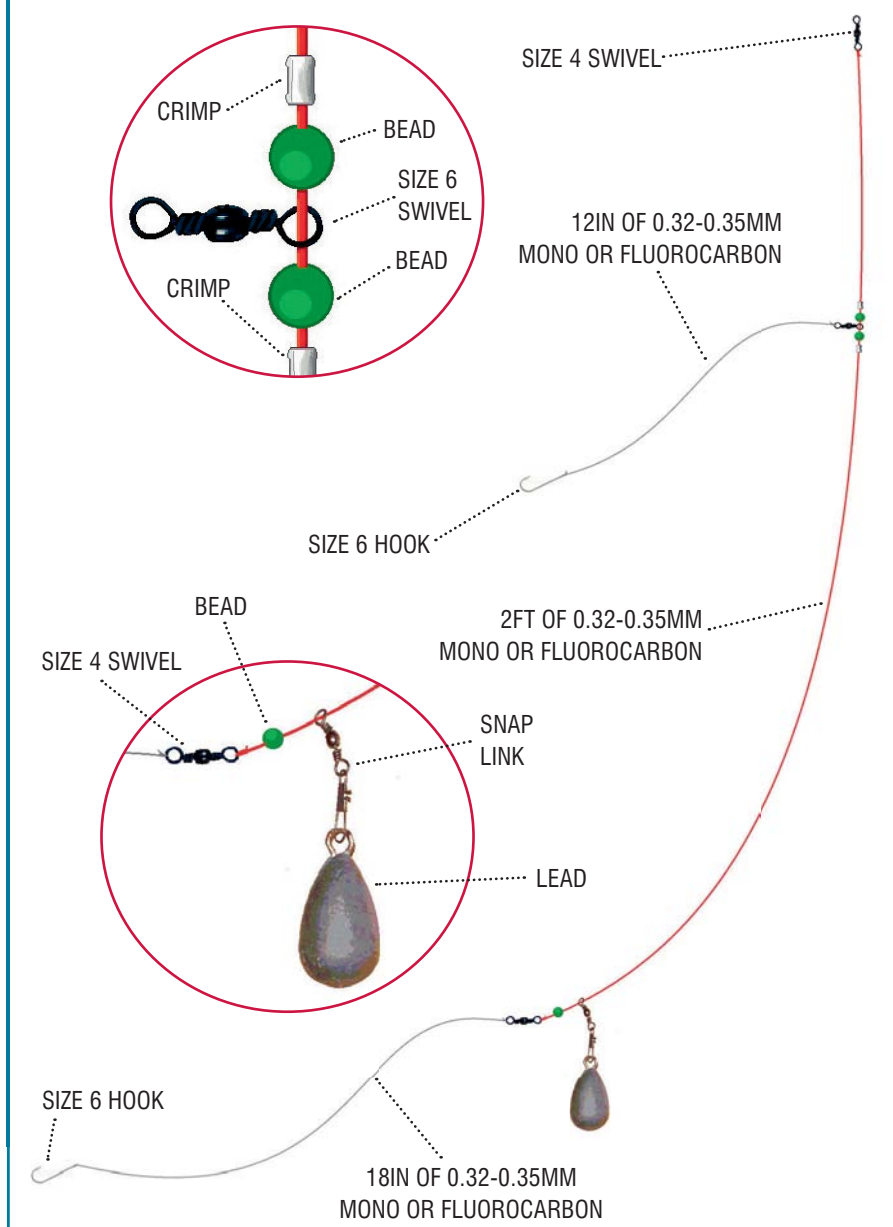
Bream have superb eyesight and as they feed they will often examine small morsels. If they see or detect anything unnatural, they will refuse it. Hooks are unnatural, as is fishing line; it's these items that we need to hide from the fish. The best way to do that is to use the finest and smallest that we can get away with. For ultimate presentation, I will always go for a top quality spade end hook – a size 6 is ideal. These hooks really do offer superior presentation, and with a little practice they become easy to tie. When tied properly on suitable line, the hook sits perfectly becoming a natural extension of the line. And then when it is baited, all but the hook point disappears.



A spade end hook offers superior presentation

WESSEX RIG

This refined version of the Wessex rig is perfect for boat bream. It is delicate enough to trick the fussy bream, but strong enough to cope with a tough fight.



This is so important, as when the fish nudges the bait it is less likely to notice the hook, which means it is more likely overall to take the bait. More and more anglers are wising up to the benefits of using spade ends for bream fishing, and as a result there are now many good brands available, geared specifically towards bream fishing.

LINE

A good hook needs a good line, and without it you may as well be fishing with

thread. In recent years we have seen the arrival and acceptance of fluorocarbon line. I can honestly say that when I began using the stuff about 15 years ago, I immediately noticed that my catch rate for bream increased greatly. It's very similar to regular monofilament, but it interacts with light the same way water does, so it's actually invisible once submerged. It sounds ideal – and it is. To start with, I generally advise anglers to choose their line by buying the correct diameter rather



Even small bream can put up an excellent fight

than breaking strain. Many modern lines are ultra-thin. Sure, that can be a good thing, as being thin makes them more difficult for the fish to detect. However, these lines will often quote a super-strong breaking strain, and while it may be a true breaking strain when pulled directly in laboratory conditions, it doesn't follow that the line will be abrasion- and knot-resistant too.

For bream fishing, look for line that is 0.32-0.35mm in diameter. Ignore the breaking strain; it will be anything from 12lb to 30lb, and either way it will be strong enough and yet subtle enough to do the job. Many brands from Japan are excellent quality, and generally with fluorocarbon, the more it costs the better it will be.

PRESENTATION AND TACTICS

These hooks and line can be presented in a variety of ways to suit conditions. It doesn't need to be over-complicated so to keep it simple I would advise using a two- or three-hook flowing trace, fished hard to the bottom when the tide is running and the fish are more

likely to have their heads down. Over slack tide, the bream move up in the water a little, so a good alternative is to use a two- or three-hook paternoster.

I mentioned earlier that bream can be finicky; they don't like to feel anything 'alien' when inspecting your offering. This goes beyond the hook and terminal tackle. When a fish picks up the bait, it may often feel resistance from your mainline and also your rod-tip. When you see a fish bite on the rod tip you must accept that the fish will feel the resistance, which of course won't be natural. This will often be enough to cause the fish to reject the bait.

There are a couple of ways to prevent this and to make the fish feel more confident when it takes the bait. The first is to use a very fine tip; this will show even the gentlest of bites and will also offer minimal resistance to the fish. There are now a lot of different brands of rods that come with a selection of different tips, and it's also possible to buy spares, so if a tip is broken it's

A supple rod tip gives great bite sensitivity



simply replaced. Many of these rods will be ideal for bream fishing. I like the rod to be longer than the average as the extra length helps cushion those diving runs that hooked fish will make.

The mainline will also seriously affect how much resistance the biting bream will feel. As braided mainline is so thin and has no stretch, it helps us by showing up every tap or bite. The downside is that it will also allow the bream to feel the rod-tip resistance. A monofilament mainline being so much softer will absorb so much more of the resistance but it doesn't show up the bites so well.

Generally what I find is that anglers will be all or nothing, either all braid with a very short mono leader or monofilament all the way through.

For me, a better option can often be to use braid as mainline but to add to it an extra-long leader, maybe 25 per cent of the water depth, and also use a light line as a leader. Typically a 15lb monofilament will make a perfect leader when bream fishing. This combination will give you the best of all worlds, and it can be shortened or lengthened to suit conditions. ➤

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BRING ON THE SUMMER!

Falmouth skipper **Frank Shaw** prepares for summer with light tackle and guerrilla advertising...

Due to sweeping westerly gales through February and into March, not a lot seemed to happen among the charter fleet in Cornwall. There was the odd exception when the weather did clear, but overall the anglers seemed to be late in coming out of hibernation. I did a couple of pollack days, which went well, my anglers landing a few nice doubles. Most of the better fish were caught on Sidewinders and Red Gill Evos, but baits like rag, herring, mackerel and sandeel tend to take the better ones.

There are some good wrecking charters around here and most Cornish skippers are red hot at wreck drifting – but the local netting fleet are even more adept at shutting them off with tangle nets. Cornish spring pollack fetch big money, especially in France, and the commercial effort seems to be more than a little overwhelming. For this reason (among others) I've recently put a lot of effort into learning the ground in and around Falmouth Harbour and Bay, preparing for the summer species that'll be arriving from Easter onwards. I hope as much as possible to target bass, bream, summer codling, wrasse, pollack, plaice, conger and ling. These grounds are prolific here in the summer and autumn, and to some extent are better protected from the commercial onslaught seen on other inshore grounds along the south coast.

Probably the most exiting thing about Cornwall is that the deep, clear, relatively tideless inshore waters lend themselves totally to light line fishing. I'm using spinning rods with hand tied rigs on 12lb mono traces. Tiny little 90mm Evos and small jigs seem to be the best way to catch the codling, and bunches of live prawns or peeler crabs on coarse fishing gear will probably account for most species this summer.

I'm so convinced that the largely untapped inshore waters of Falmouth Bay will provide excellent sport this summer that I've decided to run two trips a day from Easter onwards, for both beginners and experienced anglers. The day trips run from 8am until 4pm, the evening trip from 4.30pm until 9.30pm, which will suit all comers. Individuals are most welcome and you can find out more (or book your trip) at www.falmouthseafishing.co.uk. We're pretty lucky here; this kind of light tackle trip is very rarely cancelled because of the weather!

The only exception to the light line adventures is my exiting new blue shark fishing trips, which I will start in June. These will be held in the mainly sheltered waters of Falmouth Bay, and again will be available on the website. The truth is, I've never

actually caught a blue shark, so any anglers that have experience will be more than welcome.

A lot of in-the-know tourism professionals are plugging Cornwall as this year's hot holiday county. Last year's excellent Cornish summer, coupled with first class exposure from mega-events such as the Tall Ships Regatta, left thousands of holidaymakers vowing to return this year.

To cash in on the upcoming influx of tourists, I've been out all over Cornwall hassling the B&B hotels and holiday parks with my advertising posters, designed by our own Matt Todd. The posters look great and sport our new 'Rory Wrasse' logo, which is an idea I've had to attract more kids to the sport. Most anglers that know me realise that I can't stay quiet for long and through sheer charm and feral cunning I've managed to get my posters into some top-flight locations.

(I have, unfortunately, had a few chewed up and dumped by people with no sense of humour.) I've got 'em all over the place – a life boat, the beautiful charity sailing ship *Spirit of Falmouth*, which is run by Turntostarboard and

helps injured servicemen, and even the side of Cornwall's premier ice cream van! The brilliant Pendenis Point van is famous in Falmouth and a must for visitors. They have good taste in charter boats, too! 🐟





TO RUSSIA WITH LINE

A run-in with some KGB agents left **Sam Harris MBE** feeling bemused

Years ago I had a tackle shop in Wallsend, Tyne and Wear. The shop was on a corner and had long side windows as well as the front door and windows.

One day, two men walked into the shop. They looked as if they had just walked out of an Alfred Hitchcock thriller, or an old James Bond film. They both wore belted black leather coats, almost down to their ankles, black trilby hats pulled over their faces and black leather document cases under their arms. One of them walked to the side window and looked up and down the street, while the other looked out of the front window as they were making sure that no one was watching. One of them stood by the shop door, while the other came to the counter and very quietly took a piece of paper out

of his document case, unfolded it and slid it across the counter towards me. Neither said anything.

When I looked at the paper, it was covered in numbers. Thoughts were racing through my mind that they were spies and thought that I was too. Knowing just one or two words of Russian, which I had guessed these two people were, I spoke to them. He then started talking very quickly in Russian and somewhere among this torrent of words I managed to catch the words “fishing line”. It then dawned on me just what these numbers were – they were breaking strains of line! I led the two of them across to the shelves full of different breaking strains and left them to it.

Eventually they came back to the counter with armfuls of spools of line, and

when I added up what they owed I wrote it down on a piece of paper and showed it to them. That is when I got a bit of a shock. They had no idea how much this was in English money and both of them put their hands into their pockets and pulled out handfuls of crumpled £20 notes and offered them to me. I took what I was owed and tried to explain to them not to do that, because as sure as there are little apples, somebody was going to rip them off that day.

It turns out they were KGB officers from a ship which was berthed in the River Tyne – something they admitted to me freely – and wanted the line to take back to Russia with them, as it was very expensive to buy in their country.

If they were ever to return, I wonder what they'd make of Asso RED? 🍷



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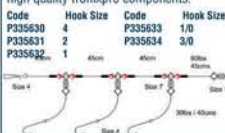
Code	Size	Price
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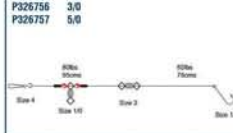
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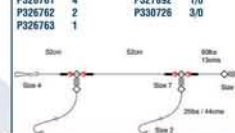
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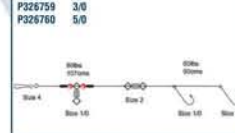
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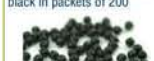


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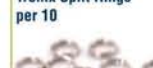
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P328606	6	10	
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